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THE

WHOLE WORKS

OF THE

MOST REVEREND FATHER IN GOD,

ROBERT LEIGHTON, D.D.,

ARCHBISHOP OF GLASGOW.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED

A LIFE OF THE AUTHOR,

BY

THE REV. JOHN NORMAN PEARSON, M.A.,

OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE, AND CHAPLAIN TO THE MOST NOBLE THE MARQUESS WELLESLEY.

Οὕτω θεῶν καὶ ἀνθρώπων θείων καὶ εὐδαιμόνων βίος, ἀπαλλαγὴ τῶν ἄλλων τῶν τῇδε, βίος ἀνήδονος τῶν τῇδε, φυγὴ μόνου πρὸς μόνον.—PLOTINI ENNEAD. 6, L. 9, c. xi.

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LECTURES*

ON

THE FIRST NINE CHAPTERS

OF

ST. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1. The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

As the bounty of God appears in the furniture and comforts of our natural life, in that he hath not only provided for simple necessity, but enriched it with plentiful variety; thus He hath done likewise towards the spiritual life in the provision of the Holy Scriptures, having in them so rich diversity of the kind of writings, prophecies and histories, poesies and epistles, and of the kind, and expressly on the same subject, four books written by the hands of four several men, but all led by the hand of the same Spirit, and all of them so harmoniously according together, as makes up one song; the four with a delightful variety of notes, but no mistuning, or jarring difference: those that seem to be so, being duly considered, do not only well agree, but there is still some instructive advantage in the diversity; each recording something, some of them divers things, that are not in the other; and what one hath more briefly, is more enlarged in some other: they are not so different as to

* First printed from the original MSS. in Dr. Jerment's edition of the Works, published in 1808, of which this is a corrected reprint.

be discordant, nor so the same as to be superfluous. Their order in the time of their writing, is, with good reason, conceived to be the same with that of their placing as we have them. This of St. Matthew was written first, and very likely in Hebrew, as more particularly for the use of his own nation, though in His purpose who set him on to work (as all the other scriptures) intended for the good of the Church in all succeeding ages. And he begins with the great mysterious point on which hangs our happiness, that which is our grand comfort, as St. Austin speaks, *the manhood of God*. The chapter hath these two, *his genealogy*, and *his nativity*, each particularly intituled; for the first words are the inscription, not of the whole book, nor of the whole chapter, but only of that first part of it. *The book*, that is, (as the Hebrew word signifies,) the *roll*, or *list* of the *generation*, that is, the descent, of *Jesus Christ*.

The account by ascending, as St. Luke does, or by descending, as this Evangelist, is altogether indifferent; neither need we, with the ancients, seek subtle and mysterious reasons of it, which are too airy to have either certain truth, or profitable use in them. The reckoning of the one only down from Abraham, and the other up to Adam, may have some more solid reason; the one having regard to the particular promise made to Abraham, and the other to the general interest of mankind, and that according to the promise made to our first parents in the garden. And this beginning in Abraham here, relishes somewhat of that we spake, of penning this gospel in Hebrew, with particular respect to the Jews for informing them first: as indeed the gospel was first to be preached to them, so might they have somewhat of the same privilege in the writing of it, He of whom it treats being born among them, and of them. And before entering to branch the lineage, the Evangelist particularly mentions David and Abraham, because of the particular promises made to them of the Messiah to come of their seed.

The great diversity of the names from David to Joseph, (of

them all indeed, save two,) has drawn several persons to take the one for the line of Joseph, the other for the line of Mary. But the diversity of names ariseth not so much from the custom of that nation, of one person having divers names, (which commonly is answered in this,) though somewhat of that may be in it; but it is much rather from that, it seems, St. Matthew does deduce the legal succession in government (by Solomon), St. Luke the natural in birth (by Nathan). St. Matthew, to make up the number of his three fourteens, even omits some immediate parents, which alters nothing at all of the true deduction, and nephews are frequently called, and truly are, the sons of their grandfathers, though not immediate. Now, though it is possible that it might be otherwise, yet, the Evangelists take it as a thing then manifest and known when they wrote, that Joseph, according to the appointment and ordinary practice of his nation, did marry within his tribe and family. So that *his* extraction, who was but the supposed and nominal father, doth give account of Mary the real mother of Jesus Christ. Other scruples, though it may be to some needful to clear them, yet I name not, as being useless to acquaint those with, who find them not. And some there be altogether needless and curious, which may pass among the vain unprofitable questions of genealogists that the Apostle advises to avoid.

Ver. 18. Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: when as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

St. Luke is more large in the history of the conception, but (which the rest have not) this Evangelist acquaints us with Joseph's behaviour in the business. We have 1st. His first doubtful thoughts within himself; 2nd. His right information, and directions from God; 3rd. His answerable acquiescence and obedience.

Perceiving Mary, who was espoused to him, to be with child before they came together, and not knowing how this

came to pass, it would certainly perplex him much; yet goes he not in a sudden passion, or rage of jealousy, to take the extremest course, but *being a just man*, that is, not strict and severe, as taking justice in a strict sense, for so it would seem contrary to the present intendment;—yet, some have taken it so, *though he was a just man;*—but it is indeed rendered as the cause of his purpose mitigating of the law's rigour, and so, *just* is here a *good man*, a man of a moderate, mild spirit, averse from rigours, as good men usually are. And as his own temper, so, no doubt, Mary's carriage did incline him to this way; observing her modesty and piety, which undoubtedly was singular, and would appear in her whole deportment; but further than that spake for her, it doth not appear that she spake all this while anything for herself: she offered not to declare the admirable way of her conception, which would have seemed feigned and incredible from her mouth, but quietly refers the matter to Him who had done it. Thus silent innocency rests satisfied in itself, where it may be inconvenient or fruitless to plead for itself, and loses nothing by doing so, for it is always in due season vindicated and cleared by a better hand. And thus it was here: she is silent, and God speaks for her.

Verse 20.—*While he thought on these things*, &c.] The whole matter is opened to him by the angel of God in a dream. This blessed child is owned by his glorious Father; the conception declared to be pure and supernatural by the Holy Ghost; his birth and name, and the reasons of it, are foretold; and upon these, Joseph is ascertained, not only of the spotless innocency, but of the matchless dignity of his espoused Mary in this conception, and the true quality of her Divine Son, and so is furnished with sufficient ground of receiving her as his wife, which accordingly he forthwith did.

The last words of the chapter are added for the future clearness concerning the purity of His birth. But denying for the time before, which was to the present purpose, affirms nothing at all for the time after, as is evident by abundant instances of his manner of speech, where *until* goes no further than the

named term any way, yea, does rather import the perpetuity of what it speaks; as Gen. xxviii. 15, *Until I have done that*, &c., and Is. xxii. 14, *Till ye die*,—which yet hath not been alleged, for anything I know, for a purgatory after death.

Ver. 22.—In the narration, the Apostle inserts (as is his custom) the parallel of the thing with a prophecy foretelling all this, of the accommodating of which I will not now insist. It is evident that it looks beyond anything that those times, or that any time, before this fulness of time, did afford. And this singular Virgin's conception was altogether agreeable to the singular person so conceived and born, both as to the purity of his human, and the dignity of his Divine, nature; that he might be known to be not only a holy, sinless man, but more than a simple man, God-man, *God with us*, as his name is.

Observation. *The book of the generation of Jesus Christ* Many great volumes of history have been written of states and kingdoms of the earth, and lives of particular famous men, and the reading of them may delight and inform the mind; but what are they all, how empty and comfortless stuff in respect of this history! *The book of the generation of Jesus Christ.* This is the gospel, the alone good tidings to all nations and all ages; still fresh, and equally good news from one generation to another. Had not the Virgin borne this Son, we must say all of us, Good for us we had not been born.

Now, that so many ages were run by, before His coming, His will, who chose that point of time, is sufficient reason. But, 1st, we may perceive by this, that the faith of the Church and people of God was exercised in the expectance of this promised seed, in whom all the nations should be blessed.

2ndly. And the esteem of this rich gift raised (and well did he deserve to be) the desire and hope of the nations. Thus the Lord hath been pleased, in other great favours, to use this way to reveal them in the promise long time before the performance: so, a son to Abraham, and the deliverance from Egypt, and that other from Babylon long before the captivity.

3rdly. He was equally from the beginning, in his Father's

view, for the interest of believers, in all those preceding ages, as if he had already lived and died and rose again, *A Lamb slain from the foundation of the world;* for He sees through all generations and successions of times, and all things in them are always alike present to His eye. But in the mean time, while the Church was held in prefiguring shadows, this was their grand desire, that he might appear in the flesh; still looking and waiting when the day should break, and the shadows flee away. And thus in the Song of Solomon may we take that wish, (Ch. viii. ver. 1,) *Oh! that thou wast as my brother!* And though the time seemed long, yet, *the vision was for the set time*, and then it spake, and lied not; and he was coming forward in the succession of time, *hastening as a roe on the mountains*, skipping from one age, from one hill to another: as here we have it, *Abraham begat Isaac, Isaac begat Jacob*, &c. And this is now the great wish of his spouse, the Church, and of each particular soul espoused to him, that he would come again as he hath promised; and he will do so. What a sweet echo there, (Rev. xxii. 17,) of *Come!* The Spirit says, *Come*, and the Bride says, *Come;* and He says, (ver. 20,) *Behold I come quickly;* and they resound again, *Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus!*

Ver. 21. *But thou shalt call his name Jesus.*] That is the name that refreshes the fainting spirits of humbled sinners, that the sweet-smelling balm, that the ointment poured out, that draws the virgins to love him; sweet in the mouth and in the ear, and life in the heart. *A Saviour, for he shall save his people from their sins.* The Jews were his people once in a particular way, but all Jews and Gentiles that run unto his name as their refuge are his people, and he hath engaged himself to be their Saviour, whatsoever kind of people they be, and whatsoever kind of guiltiness of sins they bring with them. And for that reason, as is observed, are named in this his genealogy, persons grossly stained, and the woman, too, (ver. 3) is specified, all under the same blot; and one a stranger, not of the seed of the Jews; signifying him to be a

Saviour of all nations, and even of the vilest sinners. But we know not his riches and our own poverty; therefore we run not to him. We perceive not that we are lost and perishing; therefore a Saviour is a word of little relish. Oh, were we convinced of the huge mass of guilt that lies upon us, and the wrath that for it hangs over us, ready to fall on us and sink us, this would be our continual thought, till we were resolved in it, Is this Saviour mine? And to the end we might find him so, we should tread upon all that lies in our way to run to him.

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1. Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem.

Ver. 2. Saying, Where is he that is born king of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

THE blessed Son now born hath, for part of his name, in the prophet foretelling, or rather telling his birth, (Isa. ix. 6,) *Wonderful.* He is so in his birth; that we have seen in the former chapter. He is so in his life and death, particularly in that part of his life which is ordinarily scarce at all remarkable, his infancy. The history of that, we have in this chapter. So, as in that place of the prophet, *wonderful* is the beginning of his name, he is *wonderful* in the beginning of his life.

That wonder that goes along throughout all his life and death, is in the passages here recorded, very legible, a strong contemperature of majesty and meanness; yea, these two, so far distant in notion, yet meet in him, the meanness of Man and the majesty of God. So obscurely born and so poorly lodged, yet, that birth marked, and that lodging pointed out, by a star that seems to have no other work nor motion, but to tell of

him and lead to him; and by it wise men are led from far, to offer rich presents to a poor babe, and to do homage to him as a king, and to worship him!

Then, afterwards, he is put to flee for his life in his swaddling clothes. He who came to give life to dead man, is in hazard of a cruel death at the entry of his life, and escapes it by the obscure and hasty flight of his parents with him; yet, even in that flight there is a track of majesty, that they flee, stay, and return with him, all upon Divine warnings. Thus was this *Sun of righteousness* veiled and clouded in human flesh, and a low kind of human life, and yet, some rays of Deity are still breaking through and telling, *Here dwells the Godhead bodily.*

In this chapter, these two things of him are remarkable. First, He is marvellously witnessed and worshipped. Secondly, persecuted and preserved.

He is witnessed, 1st, By a star stirring up strangers from far, to seek him, and leading them to find him.

2dly, By those strangers coming and declaring this to be their errand, and inquiring after the place of his birth.

3dly, By the chief priests and scribes, from a clear prophecy, resolving them.

Of these, and other like points in the following history, what questions are moved more curious than useful, I shall either pass wholly in silence, or only name them to pass them, to put them out of our way, that they may not stop us in what may be useful. And textual difficulties that call for clearing, I shall endeavour to open with as much briefness as may well consist with clearness, and to serve for that end of clearing them. For this star, what shall we see the better into the end and person whom it served, by deciding, if we could, much less by debating what we cannot decide, whether it was a star or a comet? Called a star for its resemblance, as the Scripture often gives things the vulgar names, it seems to have been temporary, and made for this singular service only. However, it was a star that led to the sun.

After men have pleased themselves in the employ of all their reading and wit, to find what the Magi were, further than the text comes, they can assuredly inform us nothing. They were Magi, (wise men,) and of the east; but whether from Chaldea, or Persia, or Arabia, neither that name they bear, nor the presents they bring, can certainly conclude. It cannot be denied, that all these nations called their astrologers, and generally their philosophers, by that name; and they might bring the same presents from any of those, and from divers other eastern countries: nor is there any more evidence that they were Balaam's posterity, or of his school, though the prophecy of a star arising in Jacob seems to suit somewhat well with this kind of notice given them by a star, and with their observing it, and following it. And truly, besides the uncertainty, the inutility of this may save us a labour; for what shall we be really the wiser, to know particularly what these wise men were, or whence they were? Sure I am, to make them three to fit their number to their presents, and to make kings of them, and give them names, and then to wrangle about their burial-place, is to play the fool about the wise men.

If you ask, how the star could speak this, that there was a great king born, and born in Judea, and speak it so as to persuade them to come and see; I conceive, all their skill in astronomy, and Balaam's prophecy of the star in Jacob, and the tradition of the Messiah, and his star, and Sibyl's prophesying of them, could not make the language of this star thus clear and intelligible to them. There was no doubt an extraordinary darting in of a higher light into their minds, clearer than that of the star, to make its meaning clear to them, and to draw them forth to this journey. The star appeared to them in the east, but it does not appear that it led them all the way, though commonly it be so conceived: on the contrary, after their setting forth, it seems not to have appeared to them till they came from Jerusalem, whither they went as likeliest either to find him they sought, or notice of him at least. And this likewise was by a Divine hand ordered, that both there

they might give testimony of Christ, and likewise receive their further testimony of him and address to him, and be confirmed in their persuasion concerning him, and then seasonably the star appears to establish and lead them.

Ver. 3. *When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled.*] The wise men's questions occasions Herod's fear, and that, the meeting of the priests and scribes to resolve it. They do it from the prophet Micah, ch. v. ver. 2. The difference in the cited words is really none, *Bethlehem Ephrata*, and *Bethlehem Judah*, being all one. And the prophet's words, read interrogatively, (as well they may,) are clearly the same thing with the Evangelist's narrative. However the least of all in itself, yet, it was not the least, but the greatest, by this great King's being born in it. And so, David bears the type of his Son and Lord, for he was of obscure birth in this same city.

Ver. 7—12. *Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men——sent them to Bethlehem.*] The wise men, thus answered and led, came to Bethlehem, and are now so confirmed of the royalty of this child, that they are not removed from that persuasion, nor at all staggered in it, by the sight of so much outward meanness as they found: a poor babe in a common inn; whether still in the manger or no, is not certain, so it may be; however, doubtless in a very low condition, far from royal grandeur, but yet so high in his own dignity and in their thoughts, that they fell down and worshipped, and offered their present, which they did not to Herod in all his pomp. This many ancient and modern are pleased to subtilize into mysteries, which, though I dare not confidently deny all, yet dare I aver nothing. He that brought them forth, directed them directly home, having no more business at Jerusalem. When they had found the King they came to seek, they left king Herod to seek his intelligence from others.

Ver. 13—23. But these were strange news to Herod, a *born king of the Jews*. The common fears that are of the ill genius of tyrants, and that are the fell revenge of the many

fears they cause to so many others, are now raised, and rage within him upon this report. And for all his craft, and the growth of it for cruelties upon long practice, yet is he, as it were, so thunderstruck with this fear, that he cannot resolve on any sure way for this end, but inquires the age of the child, and, it seems, defers a good time, and smothers the intended massacre, (for that answers best the doubt about the age of two years,) and then sends and kills all the children of or under that age: that was the sacrifice which in his inquiry he meant to offer, instead of worshipping the child born. His Royal Father could have preserved him otherways than by the care and flight of his supposed father with him; but thus He pleased, even in this, to carry on His Divine Son under the covert of such human and humble ways of preservation, to make him in all things like us, (sin excepted,) and to sweeten those things to us, when we are called to be like him in them, in being persecuted, and by persecution forced to flee.

That text, ver. 15, *Out of Egypt have I called my Son*, suits most fitly, the words having (as other such adapted places) their prophetical aspect to Jesus Christ, without any prejudice of their first proper sense, in persons or things typifying him. Israel is called the Lord's *son* and His *first born*, Exod. iv. 22; Jer. xxxi. 9.

The other text, *He shall be called a Nazarite*, I rather think signifies his singular holiness, which the name imports, and all the prophets foretold of him, and the legal Nazarites prefigured, than that it relates to any particular prophecy. Besides, it is in the text, *the prophets*, in general: *Which was spoken by the prophets*. Ver. 23.

Observe 1. The freedom of God's calling and drawing men unto His Son; that it follows not the track of human appearances and external engagements. Strangers are brought from far to worship Christ, and are glad at his birth. His own, amongst whom, and those particularly for whom, he was born, were not rejoiced, yea, were troubled at it; so far were they from receiving him as their king, and worshipping him. And

strange, that having resolved the Magi's question, they all sit still, for any thing we find, and not one is so taken with it, as to take share of the small latter end of their long journey, and to go some miles off, to see so great and matchless a wonder! Thus, many who are far off in their ways, are humbled and brought to Christ, and those who in external profession seemed always near to him, are still far off: *nearest the church,* (as ye say,) *furthest from God.* My brethren, rest not on your outward relations, your interest in the ordinances and profession of religion, but see how your hearts stand affected towards Jesus Christ. If you receive him as king, then shall ye partake of the sweet fruits of his kingdom.

Obs. 2. There was some appearance of reason, (though indeed reasonless,) that Herod should be stirred with the news of a new-born king; for though Christ's office never wrongs the just power of kings, yet the jealousy of it will never be out of their minds, while they are not acquainted with him: they will still think that his kingdom encroaches upon theirs; and this is the ground of their almost general enmity against him. But why were the Jews troubled, who could not but apprehend, according to the very notion of the Messiah, that if this was he, he was come for their deliverance and release from the tyranny of foreign power? Yet, they with Herod are troubled. The reason seems to be, they feared that trouble and war would arise by this appearing, and they might possibly foresee much in the way to the change, and therefore would rather have chosen to lie still under the burden of the Roman power. There is a natural prejudice in all against the kingdom of Christ, that it brings disturbance and disquiet with it, and therefore men would rather sleep in their chains than hear of a deliverance by him. Thus, the Jews in Egypt appear to have been prejudiced against the message of their going forth, which Moses brought them. Thus, a carnal heart would comply with its bondage, rather than be at any pains in the remove from it.

Obs. 3. Was the birth of Christ subject to accompanying trouble? Thus it is in the soul, a tumult, as it were, of Herod and the Jews. They that are without, viz., carnal friends, all in a rage at it: "What! turn a melancholy precise fool, go mad," &c. And within, like the tumultuous multitude, all the lusts of the heart are clamouring for their interest, noising to it, that it will suffer much in this change, that all wonted delights will be cut off, that there will arise much war and trouble by this new kingdom; besides many other doubts and fears that arise in this matter.

Think it not strange to find it thus, that the soul is tossed with disquiet at the birth of Christ in it; but let it rather rejoice in this trouble, as a sign of that blessed birth and that spiritual kingdom of Christ within it, which, however it occasion some present stir, shall sweetly compensate that, and compose the soul, and make it happy: for the *Child born* is *the Prince of Peace*, (Isa. ix. 6,) and the proper nature of His kingdom, that whereof it is made up, is, *righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.* Rom. xiv. 17.

Obs. 4. Herod's fear and anger against this news, gathers the priests and scribes together, to give clear testimony from the Scriptures of that very birth which was so hateful to him, and to verify it by the true designment of the place. Thus all His enemies' practices still prove, in the issue, of service to Him: all their stirrings against His kingdom and glory, make for it. When all is reckoned, it is found in effect that they undo themselves, and advance His end whom they oppose.

Obs. 5. *Bring me word, that I may come and worship him.* Ver. 8. This is an old piece of king-craft, we see, older than Machiavel, to serve themselves of the shadow and mask of religion, in order to walk unseen in their atheism. The most of them in their wars and confederacies pretending religion, and intending the subversion of it, would seem to come to worship, and come indeed to worry. *Cultum pretendit, cultrum intendit.*

Obs. 6. Though Herod and the priests were both enemies,

yet they concur to this testimony, and furnish it to the inquiring strangers, but went not with them, nor so much as sent any. Thus many testify, yea, teach the truth of Christ in the general, yet go not to him, as signs in the way direct others, and stir not themselves. But, my brethren, think it not enough to give a general assent to divine truths; for unless the heart be warned with them, and the soul stirred up to seek an interest in them, they save not, yea, they more deeply condemn.

Obs. 7. Divers readings of the Evangelists and Prophets, agreeing in one sense, are very useful. Bethlehem *the least*, yet, *not the least;* the least of thyself, but the greatest by the birth of the great King born in thee. Thus all are raised and ennobled by Christ. The poorest persons, and things in themselves most despicable, yet, through him, become most excellent. The simplicity of the ordinances, the word and sacraments, so far below the pomp of the world, and gaudy, false worship, in outward visage, yet are much further above them in inward dignity. Thus, the soul of a poor, simple, unlettered believer, that is the meanest and least in itself, far below the greatest persons and great wits of the world in naturals, yet, Jesus Christ being born in it, is not the least, but in spiritual excellency truly great, and far beyond all others void of Christ.

Obs. 8. Christ newly born, is hotly persecuted, put to flight, &c. This is a presage of his after condition and entertainment in the world in his own person, and still in his body, his Church, the saints. No sooner is Christ born in thee, than the wicked will be upon thee, seeking to kill him with persecuting malice, with scoffs and taunts at the least.

Obs. 9. All his motions are by divine direction. Thus, his saints in all times, particularly in times of straits and troubles, must still be depending on His pointing out of every step, and are safe in following that.

Further, we may observe, that they whom the Father intends to bring to the Son, shall not want means of their calling and leading to him. He will create a light in them, and cause

it to arise in their hearts to stir them up to inquire after him. And when they need direction and seek it, He will furnish it, even where it would be least expected. If they be driven to attend it at their hands who go not to Christ themselves, even under a ministry that hath little life in it, that is formal and spiritless in itself; yet, if God hath cast thy lot there, even there, I say, shall a soul seeking after Jesus Christ find direction and confirmation, and the word shall be made lively to it by a higher Hand; and though they go not to Christ, yet shall they give thee His true address, and direct thee right to Him, as here the scribes and priests did these inquirers.

Again, observe, how God takes hold of men by suitable ways. His call does not lie wholly in the congruity of the means, but He makes it effectual; yet, He carries that efficacy so sweetly, that there is not any violence at all. Often in the means, that sweetness consists in the particular aptness of them. These were star-gazers, and He gives them notice according to their faculty by a star. Thus, some are taken with some accessary qualification of a minister, baited by this to give ear and take liking to his doctrine. Thus, St. Augustine confesses he was caught in hearing St. Ambrose, through delight in his eloquence; for though he looked no further, yet, together with the words he loved, the things that he loved not did likewise slide and gain upon him. Again, they undertake a long and hard journey, and resolve to go on, and, missing him at Jerusalem, they inquire there concerning him, and will not leave off till they find him. A soul that hath once seen a light pointing out Christ to it, and stirring it up to seek after him, will not be driven back, nor called off from going to him, by any discouragements and difficulties; yea, they sharpen it, and set an edge on it, and make them so much the more earnest. Others can speak of him, and lie still, and not stir to go to him, as here the priests; but such a soul must have him, and will not take rest without him; will still inquire where he is, where and how I may find my Christ. A man may possibly meet with some formal minister, that knows little of Christ,

and loves him less, who yet can tell such an inquirer, that by believing he shall find him, and instruct him somewhat about the notion of faith, and inseparable repentance, and leaving off sin, which things he himself who directs, makes no use of, hath no experience of at all; yet may his information be useful to the soul seeking Christ, and in following them it may find him. And as it is in the first inquiry and journey to Christ, so, in after seeking, upon his withdrawments: as Cant. iii. and v. Though the watchmen that should direct thee, deride and mock thee, yea, though they smite and wound thee, yet, if once thou hast found the sweetness of his love, or but heard his voice speaking to thy heart and desiring it to open to him, thou wilt not leave off thy search day nor night, till thou hast found him, in how mean a condition and outward appearance soever: thou wilt see through that, and behold him thy king, thy beloved Lord, and see him beautiful, all beauty and loveliness, and wilt be forced to declare him so, that he outvies all creature loves, as not worthy to be compared: yea, that their enjoyments have not near so much sweetness as the very seekings and mournings after Jesus Christ.

Ver. 11. *Fell down and worshipped him.*] When a soul is busy seeking after Jesus Christ, if it be inquired what would you do with him, Why this is my purpose, will it say, I would worship him. I would not only be saved by him, but I would fall down and adore him, and acknowledge him my king; and if I had any thing better than another, I would offer it him. But what hast thou? Hast thou rich presents for him? Alas! no. These are called wise men, and were, it seems, rich; had rich gifts. I am a foolish and a poor creature, and I have nothing to offer.—Nothing. Hast thou a heart? Yes: a heart I have; but, alas! there can be nothing more unfit for him, and unworthy of him: it is dark, and foul, and hard, all disorder and filthiness. Yet, wilt thou give it him as it is, and be willing that he use and dispose of it as it pleases him? Oh, that he would accept of it, that he would take it upon any terms! Here it is: if it would fly out from this offer, I would

he would lay hold of it. Oh! that it were once received by him, that it were in his hand; and then let him do with it what seems him good. Sayest thou so? Then it is done. Give it really and freely, and he will take, and make it better at its worst, than all the gold, and frankincense, and myrrh of all those rich countries where they abound, and will purify, rectify, and make it quite another thing than it is. And it shall never repent thee to have made a gift of it to him. He shall frame it to his own likeness, and in return will give thee himself, and be thine for ever.

CHAPTER III.

Although the enemies of Jesus Christ, and, for a time, even his friends and followers, mistook the nature of his kingdom, yet he is a king. This being questioned, he himself avowed it before the Roman judge; and even in his low estate on earth, yet were there intermixed signs and characters of royalty. To instance here no more, the former chapter hath the history of one of them, and this of another. In that was the homage done to him a little after his entering into the world by birth. In this, we have his harbinger preparing his way a little before his coming forth into the world, to manifest himself in his words and works.

This chapter, you see, contains the history of John Baptist —1st. the nature of his office; 2dly. the exercise of his office; and that both generally to the multitude of the Jews that resorted to his baptism, and particularly, to some of more eminent note amongst them, the Pharisees and Sadducees, and singularly on the person of Jesus Christ.

Ver. 1. *In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea.*] This relates not to the history that goes before, but to that which follows to be recorded, as the usual style of the Hebrew bears. It is clear that many

years fell betwixt even the greatest part both of Christ's life and of John Baptist's. In both which, from the birth to the coming forth to preach, all the intervening time is past over in silence, not only here, but in all the other evangelists, saving one act of Christ's appearing in public about the age of twelve years, recorded by St. Luke, which was but a glance of this jewel, that lay locked up a long time after.

John the Baptist, an extraordinary person in his birth and calling, holy from the womb, *a prophet, and more than a prophet;* and Jesus Christ himself far more than he, his Lord and Master, the Prince of Prophets; and yet, neither of them came abroad in his ministry till about the age of thirty years, the time specified in the law for the service of the house of God. But our ignorance makes us bold and fool-hardy: we rush forward not knowing ourselves nor this calling, its excellency and holiness, and our own meanness and unholiness. This I say, not that I think measure doth punctually and literally tie us, especially the necessity of some times and the scarcity of faithful labourers being considered, upon which some may lawfully, yea, ought to be drawn forth, if unwilling and yet able.

But surely, the consideration of these examples should give a due check and curb to our usual precipitate hearts, which, in these times had need of some restraint, even in some who possibly have some competency both of abilities and true piety. Good fruit may be plucked too green, which, let alone awhile to ripen, would prove much more pleasant and profitable.

In these two, their long lying hid is so much the more remarkable, inasmuch as besides their singular fitness for appearing much sooner, they had so short a time allotted for their course; the Forerunner but about one year, and our Lord Jesus Christ himself but about three years and a half. But this was the assigned time in the Divine wisdom, which was found sufficient for the work committed to them; and what needs more? Let not any grudge for themselves, or for any other, their speedy removal, upon this conceit, that they might,

in nature's course, continue much longer, and, in appearance, through their labour be still more serviceable. Let all rather study for themselves, and wish unto others, that they may be diligent in their work while their day lasts, be it short or long, faithful and fruitful in their generation, and the shorter their day is like to be, work the faster; for certainly the good of life is not in the length of it, but in the use of it.

There are betwixt our Saviour and this his messenger or forerunner, divers notable agreements: their being near of kindred; their births taking place in one year, and both foretold by an angel; and as Christ was the son of a virgin, John the son of aged parents, and a mother so long barren; little odds in the time of both their appearing to the world, and abiding in it; both sealing their doctrine with their blood. But as in these, in all, the Lord hath the pre-eminence beyond his servant, so, this faithful servant did always most willingly acknowledge it, yea, his very business was to abase himself and exalt his master; and this he did, as we find throughout his history. And those of the servants of Christ that are most honoured to be nearest him, are always the greatest abasers of themselves, the most desirous to have him honoured.

John's office, we have briefly expressed in the first verse, partly in his name John Baptist, a minister of baptism, and partly in the word joined with it, preaching. Preaching of the word was joined with baptism: *John the baptist preaching in the wilderness.*

I will not here speak of the nature of Baptism, the combinement of preaching with it, their aspect each to the other, and concurrence to one excellent end; the word unfolding the sacrament, and the sacrament sealing the word; the word, as a light, informing and clearing the sense of the seal, and it again, as a seal, confirming and ratifying the truth of the word: as you see some significant seals or signets engraven, have a word about them expressing their sense.

But truly, the word is a light, and the sacraments have in them of the same light illuminating them; and this of Baptism,

the ancients do particularly express by light. Yet are they both nothing but darkness to us, till the same light shine in our hearts: for till then, we are nothing but darkness ourselves, and therefore the most luminous things are so to us: noonday is as midnight to a blind man. And we use these ordinances, the word and the sacrament, without profit and comfort for the most part, because we have not of that Divine light within us; and we have it not, because we ask it not, are not often there where it is to be had, nor earnest suitors for it: for we have His word that cannot fail, that our Heavenly Father will give even this choice gift, this light, (for that is it,) His *Holy Spirit to them that ask it.* Then would word and sacrament be sweet to us, which now are so lifeless and unsavoury.

Ver. 2. We have in the following words the sum of his doctrine: *Repent ye, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.* In the point of time, and the way of his ministry, he was indeed singular, yet, the substance of his doctrine is the same with those that went before, and those that came after him. All the prophets preached repentance, and joined in the prediction of this kingdom of God; and our Saviour himself, and his disciples, as you will after find, preached not only this same doctrine, but even in the same words: only this he had particular, that he stood betwixt the two, as it were, *the link of law and gospel*, as one calls him, and was the first that said, *The kingdom of God is at hand*, and pointed it out as come while he was speaking.

Repent.] This is the main purport and end of God's messages to man in all times, by all whom He hath sent, (as has been already said,) prophets, apostles, Jesus Christ, and his forerunner; and still, all His ministers under the gospel have no other in effect to say, than to call men to repentance, to bring them home to God. Man is naturally turned away from God, and is still further running away and hastening to the pit; and God is calling after him, Do not destroy yourselves, I will receive and pardon you; *Oh! return, why will ye*

die? And yet, men will not hearken, but run to their ruin. This word is daily preached; and yet, who almost is persuaded so much as to stop his course a little and consider what is propounded to him, much less to break off his course and return? Oh, the bountifulness and graciousness of God, who thus entreats, and still entreats base worms, whom He might tread on and crush in a moment! Oh, the wretchedness and madness of man, who refuses, and still refuses those gracious entreaties! You have been called to in these terms, and where are they that return? Where are hearts breaking for their iniquities, and breaking away from them, mourning after the Lord, and longing for a look of His countenance, and desiring nothing else? Oh! that some soul might now be stirred up, and set but upon thoughts of repenting, serious, real thoughts that would not die! The Lord will reach forth his hand and draw it to himself, though it find it cannot stir; yea, in that very desire of returning to him, he hath prevented it and touched it, and will not lose it, will not suffer it, and his begun work in it, to perish.

For the kingdom of Heaven.] Aye, this is the attractive, that which puts life and hope into the soul. Jesus Christ, peace and reconcilement in him to God, this is *the kingdom of Heaven.* And here it was *at hand*, and it came, and was published through the world. And throughout all ages of it, the Gospel is *at hand*, in the gracious offers of it to all that hear the word, and it is brought into the souls that believingly receive the word, and Jesus Christ revealed in it. This gives both hope to the sinner, and stirs up desires. Were there not a way of receiving him, it were in vain to call men to return; but seeing there is a ransom found, seeing the way is opened up, who is there that have eyes opened to behold that mercy, that will delay any longer, that will not hasten into it, and lay hold upon it?

The Gospel is not a doctrine of licentiousness, but the pure and sweet word of that new life which is in Christ. And though, in the notion of repentance, there is an aspect to, and use of

the Law, convincing of sin and death, and working a sense of misery and sorrow from that sense, yet, all this it works most sweetly and kindly, contempered with, and adapted by, the doctrine of the Gospel; for in this they mix and agree, and throughout all the Scriptures of both Testaments, run combined, as they do in the words of this sermon here. For this is the sum of the Law and the Gospel as they now stand to usward; *Repent ye, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.* Nothing is so powerful as the doctrine of free grace to convert a soul, not excluding convincements of sin by the Law, but so including them that *that* deadly, killing sentence, thus prepared, becomes excellently medicinal; (as the treats that are made of viper's flesh;) the Law, in regard of condemning power, being now dead, and not only dead, but so qualified by the cordial promises of the Gospel, that it does not really condemn, but only shews condemnation out of Christ, and so causes the soul to close with Christ, and finds salvation and life with him: as the dead viper's flesh so compounded, hath a secret virtue to advance the working of those ingredients that are in the composition against poison.

For the kingdom, &c.] This is the logic and rhetoric of the Scripture, to persuade holiness and repentance by the grace and pardon revealed in the Gospel. Those beams of love and free mercy are most powerful to melt the heart. Now, says he, the great Messias is at hand. He is come: whatsoever have been men's ways before, now they may come home unto God in him. And will not they, seeing he is come from heaven to save? Will they not come from the way of hell, from sin, to be saved by him?—And thus the Lord Jesus is daily set before us, and, in him, free forgiveness of all that is past; and if men will perish in multitudes, they must perish; but you that have a mind to live, come to him.

Ver. 3. *For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias.*] His calling is further expressed and confirmed by a prophecy of him, designating him by the nature of a *voice*, *The voice of one crying in the wilderness;* and his cry is,

Prepare ye the way of the Lord, &c., which suits well with the foregoing sum of his preaching, is in effect the same with it. *Repent* is, *prepare the way of the Lord and make his paths straight.* Repentance levels the heart to God, makes it a plain for Christ to walk in, casts down the mountains of pride, and raises the soul from base, low, earthly ways and affections, smooths the rugged passions, and straights the crooked deceit of the heart, makes it sincere and straight both towards God and man. And then the reason, *The kingdom of God is at hand,* is implied in that, *Prepare his way;* that says, He is coming, is upon his way, and therefore sends his harbinger to make it fit for him. And this is our business, to be dealing with our hearts, levelling, smoothing, and straightening them for our Lord, that he may take delight to dwell and walk in them, and refresh them with his presence; and, certainly, the more holy diligence is used in suiting the heart to his holy will, the more of his sweet presence shall we enjoy.

Ver. 4. *And the same John had his raiment of camels' hair.*] He is further described from his habit and course of life, suiting the nature of his calling, and the strain of his preaching. A preacher of repentance, not willingly resorting to courts and cities, but keeping in the wilderness; that was, not a place altogether uninhabited, but a less peopled, mountainous soil, the very place of his birth; who had his habit and diet like the place, and like the employment. Though his solitude and rough garments are a slender hold for the hermetical way magnified in the Romish church, when that of Zechariah fits better, and their clothes are sooner shaped to that pattern, where he speaks of those false tongues that *wear a rough garment to deceive,* Zech. xiii. 4;—yet, certainly, besides, somewhat extraordinary and singular in him and his calling, to which this was consonant, there is this for the example of all the messengers of God, to live as much as may be in their condition and station, disengaged from the world, not following the vain delights and ways of it; not bathing in the solaces and

pleasures of earth, and entangling themselves in the cares of it, but, sober, and modest, and mortified in their way of living; making it their main business not to please the flesh, but to do service to their Lord, to walk in his ways, and *prepare his way* for him in the hearts of his people. Further, this was implied in this mean way of life, that the less of human grandeur, the more of Divine power, and of the majesty of God, might appear in his ministry.

Ver. 5. *Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan.*] That is, great multitudes flocked to him, to hear him, and be baptized. For though Baptism, in the way he used it, was not usual, yet their accustomed use of legal washing made it the less strange, and the more acceptable to them. And being accompanied with the doctrine of repentance, remission of sins, and the news of the kingdom of heaven approaching, it could not choose but find some reverence and attention. But certainly, of multitudes that will run to the word, and, possibly, particularly flock after the ministry of some for a time, there may be many, as doubtless were there, that are but light stuff, carried with the stream as corks and straws are. Men should examine well even such things as seem to speak some love to religion in them, whether they be real or not. This John does not spare to tell home to the seemingly best of those that came to him, that esteemed themselves, and were esteemed by others, more religious than the multitude. Yea, the Spirit of God directed him to deal more sharply with them than with others that came to him; they being of all others commonly most confident of self-righteousness, and therefore furthest from the true work of repentance, which humbles the soul to the dust, and lays it low in its own eyes: these sects being beyond the multitude, swelled with conceit of their own estate, he spares the rest, and pricks them sharply that the tumour may fall. It may seem somewhat strange that he entertains so roughly those that came respectfully to him, and with others were willing and desirous to hear his doctrine, and partake of his baptism. Was

not this the way to beat them back, and make them distaste both?

There is indeed much prudence required in the ministers of the word, to know to attemper their admonitions and reproofs, that by too much rigour they discourage not weak beginners who are inquiring after the ways of God; but withal they should be no less wary that, by too much credulity and lenity, they sooth not any in their formality and carnal confidence. And the most we have to deal withal, commonly are in most hazard upon this hand; there is too little heart humbling. And many are ready to take up some piece of reformation of their ways, and the externals of religion, and deem themselves presently good Christians. Oh! the deceit and slothfulness of our hearts! How ready are we to lay hold upon an easy guise of our own, and think what some further press is but melancholy and needless preciseness!

Ver. 8. *Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance.*] Though he wonders at their coming, and fairly tells them so, yet, he rejects them not, despairs not of them; he gives them sound advice, which implies always some hopes of prevailing. Give none up for desperate; catch hold of what they do, to drive them to what further they ought to do. You profess *to flee from the wrath to come: bring forth fruits then.* You say you are Christians and believers: Oh! let your ways and lives say so. Let Christ dwell in your hearts, and be shewn in your lives.

Ver. 9. *Think not to say, We have Abraham to our father.*] The foolish heart is still leaning to this fancy of external relations and privileges. Beware; rest not on these,—the reformed religion, pure ordinances, or a place of esteem possibly amongst the strictest sort of reformed professors. And do not think you put an obligation on religion, and that it is indebted to you; but pray take heed. God can leave you, and deliver you up to these vain thoughts, and provide Himself without you. He can draw the remotest and unlikeliest to Himself, and let you go.

Ver. 10. And this is a sifting, trying time. He comes, who will unmask your hypocrisies, and search you to the bottom; *who will lay his axe to the root of the trees*, and cut up the fruitless. Where the Gospel comes in greatest power, there is the certainest and saddest weight of judgment on the unbelieving and impenitent, the formal and fruitless.

Ver. 11. *I indeed baptize you with water.*] The true badge of a messenger of Jesus Christ is, to abase himself and to magnify his master. *Baptism with the Holy Ghost, and with fire*, may, possibly, have some aspect to the singular sending of the Holy Ghost in fiery tongues. That purifying virtue, that flame of love, Oh that we found it!

Ver. 12. And only they, *the wheat*, are for *the garner*, they that are pure and spiritual: *the chaff*, light and vain hearts, are fuel for the fire. No middle class; we must be either baptized in that fire, or burnt in this.

Ver. 13—15. In the baptism of Christ, observe the exemplary humility both of the master and of the servant: of the master, in subjecting himself to this ordinance; of the servant in administering it, first, in his modest question and declining it, and secondly, in his quiet yielding and obedience. He that was so pure and spotless, had no need of that, or any other washing; *He, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world*, as this John testified; *He, the fountain opened for sin and iniquity*, and therefore, well says he, *I have need of thy baptism.* Yet here he humbles himself to be baptized. Oh! that we who are baptized had more of his likeness in this humble reverence for Divine ordinances, looking on them as his in every warranted hand. What though he that teaches be less knowing and less spiritual than thou that hearest, one that might rather learn of thee, yet the appointment of God obliges thee to attend as humbly and regardfully to his ministry as if he were an angel.

John recoils a little. Thus, truly, as he in regard to the person, so will every humbled, self-knowing minister, even in reference to the ordinances themselves, wonder often, and be some-

times at the point of forbearing. Oh! who am I, to handle such holy things, to stand in so high a service, to convey life, I that am dead; to administer so high, so pure and purifying ordinances, myself so impure! But again being commanded and engaged of God's own hand, that overcomes and silences; and in the continuing in the work upon that consideration, there is no less, yea, the greater humility, than in the other thoughts of unfitness; a submissive resignation of a man to his Lord. However the matter seem to me, and truly I deem myself unworthy of the lowest employment without thee, yet, Thou appointing, I have no more to say: good reason Thy will stand, and not mine.

Ver. 16, 17. Now in the Baptism, the humility of both is richly rewarded with so glorious a vision and voice. The thing is mean and low in the common form of it; baptized in the common river. Oh! what transcendent glory in such a manifestation of that blessed Trinity on earth, that is the perpetual wonder and happiness of Heaven. Oh, that we had eyes to see it, and that our hearts were more taken with this glance here, and the hopes of full vision ere long! *Like a dove.* Oh! that *that* Spirit were more abundant in us, flowing from our *Head*, on whose head it here rested.

My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.] In this word lies all the comfort of a Christian. No pleasingness, nor acceptance, indeed, out of him; but in him, all acceptance of all who are in him. Nothing delights the Father but in this view. All the world is as nothing in his eye, and all men hateful and abominable by sin. Thou, with all thy good-nature, and good-breeding, and good-carriage, art vile and detestable out of Christ. But if thou get under the robe of Jesus, thou and all thy guiltiness and vileness, then art thou lovely in the Father's eye. Oh! that we could absolutely take up in him, whatsoever we are, yet shrouded under him! Constant, fixed believing is all. Let not the Father then see us but in the Son, and all is well.

CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1. Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

The Apostle doth fitly style our Lord Jesus, *the captain*, or leader, *of our salvation*. He marches, leads all the way, puts us on nothing that he hath not first encountered. And in his going before, there is that decorum there marked, Heb. xii. 10. *It was meet he should be made perfect by sufferings*. So particularly by this kind, that is the sharpest sensation, by these he was entered into his calling; initiated or consecrated, as the word there is. Let none, therefore, of his followers think to go free. If you mean to follow Christ, reckon for temptations, to meet them even at first, and so in all the way. We readily misreckon, though warned; we count as we would have it; write up such ease and joys, &c., and think not on afflictions without, and temptations within, which yet are much our portion here. Unwise, to put to sea and expect no storms, nothing but fair weather! Let this be our warning, that we be not secure; we shall meet temptations. But let this be our comfort, that we be not dismayed, that in this we do follow him. He went before us in this conflict, and overcame before us, and for us; and we likewise, in his strength, shall overcome.

Then.—When? Look backward. *Then*—presently after he was baptized, and not simply by the water of Jordan, but by the Spirit from Heaven, and was singularly replenished, *full of the Holy Ghost*, as St. Luke hath it, Luke iv. 1. Thus shalt thou be sure to be assaulted when thou hast received the greatest enlargements from Heaven, either at the sacrament or in prayer, or in any other way; then look for an onset. This arch-pirate lets the empty ships pass, but lays wait for them when they return richest laden.

Then.—Again, look forward. *Then*—when he was to enter

on his work, his public ministry. Thus look to be assailed, when thou art to engage in any special service. Each according to his place will find this: when he is upon some purpose of honouring God in any particular undertaking or course, and is nearest the performance, then shall the strength of hell be mustered up against him. Now, knowing it to be thus, this ought rather to embolden than discourage us in any such way. This expert enemy knows his interest well, and does not thus bestir himself lightly, but feels that his kingdom is in danger, and that he shall certainly be a loser.

Now, as this is incident to every Christian, and particularly, according to the eminency of their service, to ministers of Jesus Christ, as here to him when towards entering on his own ministry, so, in this, they should reinforce themselves in him; should follow him on, and apply and employ him for the victory.

This [Temptation] was one of Luther's schoolmasters, and so it is to all the servants of Christ; and so are all the three, Prayer, Meditation, and Temptation. And this is very needful, that both with the more skill, and with the more compassion, they may be helpful to them that are tempted. Certainly in all things, experience gives the deepest sense and the readiest faculties. He who was here tempted, could know more by speculation than ever any man; yet was it found meet, that even He should be trained by the experience of these things, as in that cited place, Heb. ii. 10—*perfected* as captain, made a complete commander by hard services, sufferings, and temptations. So Heb. iv. 15 and v. 2—8. Men expert in war laugh at the learnedest discourse of pedants, as is reported of Hannibal.

Oh! heart feeling is a main thing in this. It is going to the wrong hand, for a troubled or tempted Christian to go to an untroubled, untempted minister, who never knew what that meant. Their errand takes not: they find little ease in complaining of their grief to him that never felt such a thing; as Nazianzen observes, that they who are stung with a serpent, cannot endure to bemoan themselves to any but some that

have felt the pain. To have found such trouble, and then an issue, such and such comfort,—Oh, it enables much in that case. See 2 Cor. i. 4, 6.

Led by the Spirit.] That same Spirit that came down on him in baptism, chap. iii., here leads him forth to his conflict, not for this alone, to seek it, but leads for such exercise there, wherein it was designed and appointed to meet him. The Spirit in us doth not carry us wilfully seeking of temptations; yea, we pray by His direction who was thus led, that we may not be *led into temptations;* that is, that we may be so led into them as not to be left to them and foiled in them; but he leads us into those places and employments, when we follow his leading, wherein, by God's disposal, we do meet with temptations. And to be thus led any way whatsoever, is safe, and the issue happy, as here it was. That is sweet in all things, to be carried; not to go of ourselves any way, but that of each step it may be said, *Led by the Spirit.* Led to be tempted, on purpose that he might return with the glory of the victory.

Into the wilderness.] This is the field chosen for this duel betwixt the roaring lion of the bottomless pit and the royal lion of the tribe of Judah. This Serpent tempted the first Adam in the garden, and the second Adam in the wilderness, with different success indeed; and ever since doth still tempt the posterity of both, in all variety of places and conditions, in several ways suitable. Company and conversation have their temptations, and solitude, even the wilderness, hath its own too. No place or estate on earth is privileged; no business, not lawful labouring, eating and drinking, yea, not fasting and praying; yea, in these are readily the most assaults, but in them likewise the sweetest victory: as here.

Ver. 2. *And when he had fasted forty days.*] Though this was a miraculous and extraordinary fast, as a mark of his extraordinary person and calling, and of the ministry of the Gospel's harmoniously according with the Law and the Prophets, Moses and Elias, yet, surely a holy fast it was, wherein

our Saviour (as those his forerunners, no doubt) fed upon prayer and Divine contemplation.

He hungered.] So all along, as in this fast, so, with his following hunger, Divine power combined with human weakness, such as was sinless.

Ver. 3. *If thou be the Son of God.*] Doubtless the Tempter was in some doubt himself about this; though he saw many concurrent proofs of it, yet thought possibly it might be otherwise, and therefore tries. And as he expresses his own doubt, so he suggests the doubt to our Saviour. It is vain to specify these three temptations by three particular sins, for they are each complicated and made up of variety, as usually all sins are. In this I would not exclude something of working on appetite, stirring to an impatient, intemperate haste in satisfying that; and the exception is weak, that it is not delicacies, but bread that is propounded, for that is as strong a temptation in extreme hunger, as delicacies; but the main is unbelief, and so making haste. So, in the first temptation of our first parents, the matter of pleasing appetite made some ingredient, but the chief thing was unbelief: *Yea, hath God said?* Gen. iii. 6. And so here, *If thou be the Son of God.* And as that was joined to pride, stirring them to a proud desire to be gods, so in this case, Satan aims at drawing a needless shew of it, that Christ was God. And our Saviour's answer meets all these suggestions: that of his pressing hunger, finding another answer for it than bread; that is not the only thing for it; that of doubting or unbelief, (as it was the main evil, so the main of the answer stands opposed to it,) trusting in the word of God, that is, in His power and effectual support. I need not myself try conclusions to see whether I be the Son of God, nor (which answers the bent of it) need I at this time give a trial that I am the Son of God. So he diverts the satisfying him in that point of his Godhead, and answers only for a man: *Man shall not live upon bread alone,* &c.

The second and third temptations, whether they were by change of place, or representation of species, as I think it

cannot be forcibly either concluded or refuted either way, so it is not of much benefit or importance that it should be. The notion of throwing him down headlong, (though it is not thus urged by any that I remember,) seems to me with the strongest appearance to incline to a real standing upon the place; for if not, then it was necessary that both the place and the steepness should not only be represented to our Saviour's imagination, but that he should really believe that he was there; otherwise, the temptation of casting himself down from thence were altogether null, and could have no place. Nor though it may be granted that he might suffer a false representation, (somewhat of which must likely be allowed, to make up the third temptation, with the advantage of a high mountain,) yet, whether we may fairly admit in our Saviour an apprehension of such a false representation as true should be considered.

But leaving that, we find the second temptation to be, clearly, to a presumptuous tempting of God, and the third, to the horriblest apostacy from God, even to worshipping of the devil, and that baited with an offer of the world; first to commit idolatry to it, and the next, to himself for it. He is clearly beat off in all; it could not be otherwise. But truly this may seem strange, that Satan durst suggest such horrid, foul notions, to so holy, so singularly a holy man, for that at least he knew him to be, and had strong suspicions that he was more than a man, even the Son of God.

And this I think the sovereign satisfaction of a soul, in the matter of blasphemous injections, which many, even holy persons, are troubled with: much is said to it by many; but surely there is nothing like the view of this instance. That he uses thee so, what wonder? He had the hardiness even to use thy Lord so, who was so high above all stain of sin, as in all things, so in these. True indeed, we cannot well avoid all soil, but some guilt sticks to us; as from the throwing of a dirty ball against the wall, though it is presently beat back, yet it leaves a spot behind; our nature being so easily receptive of sinful defilement. But he was altogether undefilable

in all assaults; yet this is our grand comfort, that he was tempted, and even that with such vile things. So then, if finding any such thing, cry to him for help, as one who can feel it, and entreat him to see how grating these thoughts are to thee, and to pity thee, and repel Satan; and he will do it, and will account those not thy sin at all, but his, and if any thing stick, will wash it off with his own blood.

Observe. The Devil can cite Scripture. Receive not, then, every thing at first, that comes with an *it is written;* and as not every thing of men's opinions thus backed, so, not those doubts that are raised within thee, and managed against thee in this way. How often does Satan make a poor believer at a stand by some scripture objection! But take this course, follow thy Captain in this. Satan is a liar, and cuts and pares when he cites; as he here left out, *thy ways,* to make room for, *Cast thyself headlong,* which was not the way. Now, our Saviour does not contest with him about this, takes no notice of that sleight, but, in a plain, full counter-blow, beats him out of it, gives him another *it is written,* that carries clear how he abused his. And there is admirable wisdom in this, much more than if he had disputed about the word which all observe here was cunningly left out; for in this, our Saviour teaches us our better way in this case, either with perverse men, in the avouching of their errors, or with Satan, in his thus assaulting us with misalleged scripture, not so much to subtilize about the very place or words abused. It may be so cunningly done sometimes, that we cannot well find it out; but this downright, sure way beats off the sophister with another place, clearly and plainly carrying that truth which he opposes and we adhere to. So, though thou canst not clear the sense of an obscure scripture, thou shalt always find a sufficient guard in another that is clearer.

Our Saviour was pleased thus to bear many assaults, and thus to fence and beat off the Tempter by the word, both for our instruction and comfort, who otherwise, for himself, could immediately have repelled him, and sent him back at first.

But indeed he *pleased not himself* in anything; had an eye to us in all he did and suffered, and did all in reference to our advantage. Oh, how should we love him!

And let not any abuse of the scripture, by Satan or by men, abate our esteem, or lead us to abandon our use of it; but let us study it still, labour to be well acquainted with it, make it our magazine, have ready our defences from thence in all kinds of assault. Oh! let this word dwell richly in us, for it is our life. A stone out of this brook smites Goliah. And observing these evils here, labour to be fortified against them. Surely they were main ones, that were brought forth in this combat. Ready we are either to distrust our God, or, in abused confidence, to presume upon unwarranted ways. And for the third temptation, how strong is it, though not to gain that gross point of disclaiming God for love of the world, yet, how many hearts are secretly and insensibly inveigled and stolen away from Him by it, drawn to neglect His worship, or to cold remissness in it, and to follow the ways of the honour, gain, or pleasures of this world, that Satan suggests, and so to worship him and it altogether, instead of the Lord our God, whom alone we are to adore and serve, and whose due is all our heart!

Ver. 10. *Get thee hence, Satan.*] Thus, when anything moves to debauch and draw off the heart from God, it is to be beat away with indignation. And thus in all conflicts, continue fighting in thy Lord's strength: give not over, resist still, and the enemy shall flee, as here.

Ver. 11. *Then the devil leaveth him.*] Retires indeed, but it was *for a season*, as St. Luke hath it there; ch. iv. ver. 15. So we should still make for new onsets, and not promise ourselves, upon a cessation, perpetual quiet, but rather fortify in those times of breathing. But this know, that our Lord is tender of us, and will inlay our painful conflicts with sweet comforts. Let us remember to call our Lord to take him off, and he will not see us surcharged or tempted above what we are able, or he enables us to bear; and he will refresh us with

consolations, strong consolations as we need. And these in a high degree usually follow hard conflicts patiently and stoutly sustained. Our Lord had a cordial draught both before and after this conflict: before, in the last verse of chap. iii., he was confirmed in the very point he was assaulted in; *This is my beloved Son.* And as he was confirmed before, so was he comforted after; *The angels came and ministered to him.* Oh! the sweet issue our Lord gives to many a sad battle of weak Christians, wherein they possibly thought once, that all was lost, and that they should never hold out, and come through it! But never think so: we shall come through all, and the day shall be ours.

Ver. 12. *Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee.*] We need not fear. God uses men, but needs them not: when they are restrained or removed, he can provide more. When John is shut up, Jesus comes forth.

Ver. 13. *And leaving Nazareth.*] Not being honoured in his own country. So, commonness of things makes them cheap and low with us, how excellent soever. This disease of lightness and novelty so natural to us, we have need to watch against.

Ver. 14—16. *That it might be fulfilled,* &c.] Now the prophecy is raised to its higher sense. The relief which the prophet speaks of, in relation to a temporal sense, was but a shadow. This is light indeed, Jesus coming into their coasts; the Sun of righteousness arising. Oh, how pitiful is the condition of those nations that still are in darkness, destitute of his light! How should we pity them! But how much more pitiable their condition, who, in the midst of this light, are still in darkness; it shining in their land, but not in their hearts! These still are under *the shadow of death.* Oh! fear and tremble, you that in the clear Gospel light are sitting still in your natural darkness of mind and hardness of heart, and still loving that darkness, and refusing this Divine light. Oh! let it in, that you may live, and not pass from darkness to darkness,

from inward darkness to utter darkness, where is *nothing but weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.*

Ver. 17. *From that time Jesus began to preach.*] So gave he forth light by preaching, shewing the way of salvation. And He was eminently *the light*,—He, that very way of salvation. He, the Prince and Saviour exalted to give repentance, and remission of sins, and the kingdom, yet, humbles himself to be the Herald, to proclaim his own gift and pardon. And in humbling himself to this work of preaching, he hath highly exalted it. Shall ever that be accounted low, and fit only for mean persons, which the Lord of Glory made his calling and work in the world?

And to say, Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.] This was said before to be the sermon of his Forerunner; not only the same sense, but the very same words. He who needed to borrow from none, but gives all to all, yet disdains not to preach this over after John Baptist. There is certainly a pride and vanity in the minds of men, in that extreme affecting still either to speak or hear new things. Oh, were you called together often, and this said as from God, *Repent ye, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand*, and found obedient, now one heart yielding, and then another, though it might seem poor to vain heads, yet Oh, what excellent preaching were it! God's voice more regarded and owned, would make that sweet which we often despise.

Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Oh, sweet invitation, the offer of a pardon to a repenting sinner; but how much more that of a kingdom! He might say, *Repent, for the prison of Hell is at hand*, if ye do not; but rather he this way draws, by the happiness and glory attending our return.

Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand. And at hand to you, if ye repent, to be yours; grace and all the rich promises of it, and, within a while, full glory. And no more ado; it is *at hand.* Let go your hold of the one, and straight catch hold of the other; it is *at hand.* But who believes this? If we do, what madness is it not to accept it!

The chapter hath, first, our Saviour's preparation to his public calling; secondly, His begun administration of it in all the three parts, preaching of the Gospel, calling disciples, and working miracles.

Ver. 18. *And Jesus walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren.*] Here we have the calling of two pairs of brethren, both of the same calling, *fishers*, to a higher calling of the same name, *fishers* still, but *of men:* that is the excellency and dignity of it. Not now to follow out the resemblance, there is much art in this divine fishing of human souls, both in casting the net in public preaching, and angling in private converse.

Ver. 19. *And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.*] This was as Elijah's touch to Elisha, *What have I done to thee?* Did our hearts once hear his voice, net would not entangle us; nor cables bind us; no friends, nor parents, nor business would hold us: we should break from all, yea, if it might be otherwise, would run from all, to follow Him.

Ver. 23. *And Jesus went about all Galilee.*] Here observe his divine power and goodness shining forth in the miraculous cure of all diseases. But these bodily cures were but preludes of the main work; but signs hung out to shew where the Physician of souls dwelt. And whatsoever be thy spiritual maladies, though never so many and so desperate, yet come. Never any came to him and went away uncured.

CHAPTER V.

Ver. 1—12. And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain. And when he was sat, his disciples came unto him.

Ver. 2. And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor, &c.

Others may grow stale, but this sermon, never so often read over, is always new. Oh, how full of Divine doctrine! How

plain, and yet how high and excellent, delighting the soul as a bright day, clear light all along! We need not strain for the clearness of it upon that word, *He opened his mouth;* for every word here spoken, speaks for itself; carries, as light does, its own evidence. He begins with that great point which all are concerned in, and all naturally someway desirous to know, the doctrine of blessedness, in short aphorisms; and the rest of his discourse follows out the same argument, directing the way to happiness in those graces, *purity*, *meekness*, *mercy*, &c. For although all grace is radically one, and he that hath one hath all, yet, they are thus specified; 1st. For the weakness of our apprehensions, which take not full views so easily, they are spelled out to us, but is only so, that taking them the easier severally, as letters of one word, we may set them together again, as all being one *blessedness*. 2ndly. Though every true Christian hath all graces, yet all are not alike eminent in all. We may confidently say, that there is no one who equally excels in every grace, but in several persons several particular graces do most act and evidence themselves, shooting up above the rest; yea, in one and the same person, one grace will, at some times, be more evident and sensible than at others. 3dly. They are thus parcelled out to us, that we may apply ourselves the more particularly sometimes to the study of one, sometimes to the study of another, the neglect whereof is a great cause of our great deficiency in them all. We hear them and like them, may be, and think, these are good, but we do not set to the attainment of them: we applaud, and leave them there; approve all, and neglect all. If at any time we have any desires after them, they are general and confused: we grasp at all, and catch nothing.

This I would recommend, to be more particular in our purposes; sometimes to set ourselves to some one grace, not secluding nor turning away the rest, for that cannot be, but yet, more particularly plying that one, were it *humility*, *poverty of spirit*, *meekness*, or any other; and for some time to make that one our main task, were it for some weeks or months

together, and examine every day's practice in that particularly. But like unsettled students among many books, we rove and reel, and make offers at every grace, and still lag behind, and make no considerable purchase nor progression in any.

Now, for blessedness, what is the common voice, at least, of men's minds and practices, though they speak it not out? *Blessed* are the rich, the honourable, the well-landed or well-befriended, and they that can grow great enough in the world. But if we believe *this* Teacher, it is not these; no such matter. But if blessedness be in things spiritual and inward, then men would imagine readily of those things which sound highest that have some grandeur, and somewhat heroic in them,—in great knowledge of faculty, and zeal for high services, or in raptures, and ecstasies, and singular divine experiences. But here is nothing of these neither, but the meanest, most despised things; yea, those that (some of them) seem to sound as miserable and sad: *The poor in spirit—they that mourn—the meek*, &c. Oh! sweet, lowly graces, *poverty of spirit, meekness*, that grow low, and are of dark hue, as the violets, but of a fragrant smell; as one says, chief in garlands: these are prime in the garlands of a Christian. Oh! study these; seek to have them growing within you. Suffering remarkable martyrdom may seem to have some lustre in it; but how take you it, to be reviled, and scoffed at, and hated, and taunted, by Christians in name, because thou desirest to be one indeed?

Each of these beatitudes, for all the low sound at first, ends high, and makes good the title. *Blessed are the poor in spirit;* ay, they are the only rich, heirs to a kingdom, and such a kingdom: *theirs is the kingdom of God.* Lofty, vain minds are truly base. By *poverty in spirit* is meant, I conceive, not only a sense of spiritual want, (though commonly it is so taken,) but, more comprehensively, a lowly frame of heart, not swelled either with desires, or delight, or conceit, of any worldly advantage, or self-excellency, either outward or inward. Thus may a man be, amidst very many such advantages and riches, *poor*, and that is his blessing. Yet here is connoted, I con-

ceive, the condition of outward poverty as more suiting, and usually more connected with that temper of spirit. In St. Luke it is, *Blessed are the poor,* opposed to the rich. And he that is poor in spirit, if outwardly poor, is truly rich in the midst of poverty. So, *they that mourn shall be comforted, and the meek shall inherit the earth.* Not that this is their all, for *theirs is the kingdom of heaven,* also. But this word from the Psalm carries a fit promise, that meekness, seeming to be that which makes a man a prey to every one, and easily wronged and thrust out by all, yet shall be provided and protected, and he shall enjoy so much even of this earth as is fit for him, with more quiet and sweetness, than the proud and boisterous, who are ever, almost, in contentions.

The pure in heart, abridging themselves of sights and enjoyments that the world seeks after—sensual delights, *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,*—shall have a better sight, and purer joy, suiting them; sweetest communion with God here, and ere long full vision: *for they shall see God.* So in the rest, it is clear.

Blessed are they which are persecuted——Rejoice.] Look off from your sufferings, and each way you will find matter of encouragement and joy. Look back to *the prophets that were before you,* and look forward to *the reward in heaven* that is before you. The firm belief of that kingdom, that glory above, that vision, what will not make easy to forego or undergo, to do or suffer? It is the want of that belief, that keeps the low things of this earth so high in our esteem.

Ver. 13, 14. *Ye are the salt of the earth—ye are the light of the world.*] This next point particularly concerns the disciples, and after them, the ministers of Christ. In these resemblances lie their dignity and their duty; and the former is used for urging the latter; and that is the best view of it. Let men look as much as they can upon the excellency of this their high calling, so that it raise their spirits to high endeavours of acting suitably to it. What a simple thing, to feed self-conceit by this! Alas, poor man! He is *light* indeed in another

sense, who grows vain upon it that he is called *light*, and does not rather tremble that he is so unlike it in this. *Salt*—What were all table provisions without this? *Light*—What were the world without this? Christ communicates his own name to them, *The light of the world.* All the children of God are children of light, but his messengers more eminently so. Men that think ministers a needless commodity in the world, if they give any belief to the Gospel, may see what they are: and if you could live well without salt, and without light, so might ye without ministers.

But, alas! how much unsavoury salt, how many dark lights are amongst us! And if the salt lose its savour, it can do good to nothing, and nothing can do good to it. The most unprofitable piece of the world, is either a profane, a carnal, or a formal, dead minister; he is good for nothing,—unsavoury salt, of all things the most unsavoury. And *if the light within thee be darkness,* (as our Saviour says afterwards,) *how great is that darkness!* Oh, that Christ shined more in our labours, in our conversation, and in companies where we come; that we were more savoury and seasoning others; not in jestings, or in sports, (these salts are unsavoury in ministers,) but in words of edification, *ministering grace to the hearers!* And this, though it specially applies to ministers, yet extends to all Christians. *Let your light so shine,* not to make yourselves somebody, but for the glory of *the Father of lights,* whence you have that light, *your Heavenly Father.* Oh, that this were predominant in all! Happy that heart that is filled with constant desires of this, and that aims at the glory of God, minding self in nothing, but God in all!

Ver. 17. *Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets.*] He lays hold of this, takes occasion upon clearing a mistake that had arisen respecting him, to pass on to such doctrines as he knew were necessary for the clearing of the Law of God, wronged by false glosses; and he thus vindicates both himself and that Law whereof he was the lord and author. Some, possibly, to obstruct his way, and prejudice him in

men's opinions, spake of him as a teacher of new doctrine, and an enemy of the Law: others, it may be, hearing of a doctrine that sounded new, would willingly have had it so, would have been free, and enjoy libertinism. Now, to dispel both misapprehensions, our Saviour owns his purpose to be nothing such. On the contrary, *I come not to destroy*, but *to fulfil*. This did he in all things, in doctrine and in practice; and he declares it a thing impossible for any to annul the Law; that if any should offer at it, in his actions or doctrine, he should undo himself, but not the least tittle of the Law. Yet further, these men that cry up the Law, and would charge me with the dissolving of it, for all their noise, I declare to you, that except you take heed, and observe that Law better than they do, ye cannot enter into Heaven. How many deceive themselves, as these self-pleasing, vain men did! But be warned. *Except your righteousness*, your religion, go beyond the civil neighbour, the good church-keeper, the formal, painted professor, ye shall fall short of that which both you and they reckon upon. How many, who think themselves fair for Heaven, shall find themselves wofully mistaken, when it is past help! Oh! examine well in due time, and see whether you are indeed for Heaven or not. It is the saddest mistake ever man fell into, to dream on of Heaven, till he find himself in Hell.

Ver. 21. *Ye have heard*, &c.] Now he clears the Law, and teaches the true spiritual sense of it, in divers points of it, wherein it was grossly abused; shews that it binds not only the hand and the tongue, but even the heart. Men aiming at self-righteousness by the Law, and desirous of that as cheap as might be, with the least pains, not being willing or able to rise to its perfection, drew it down and shaped it to their imperfection; cut it to the measure of external obedience, and that of the easiest size. Thus men readily do; they rather fancy the word and rules of Christianity to their humours, than purge and correct those humours by the word. This exposition of the sixth commandment condemns not only gross murder, but rash anger and reviling speech, as a breach of it,

and condemnable: which is expressed in allusion to the civil judicatures among the Jews, and thence, in case of any such thing, he presses speedy and undelayed reconcilement, as a thing most acceptable to God, and without which no other homages or religious performances would be acceptable to him. Now it is not only anger without cause that is condemned, but vain, undue anger exceeding cause and measure. Were there the consciousness and constant regard of this; were every reproachful or disdainful word, every harsh look, every rising angry thought against thy brother looked on as murder, Oh, in what order would it put thy tongue, eye, and heart, in this respect! This we hear, and think it should be thus, but we have not resolved that it must be thus, do not watch and pray that it may be so, after an unchaste look and touch of impure desire, though not breaking out to act, yea, though not ripening within to full consent.

And by occasion of this, a man being ready to think, Oh, how strait, how hard is this! he adds in verse 29, a useful advice, and a powerful encouragement with it. *If thine eye offend thee*—any thing that proves a snare, how dear soever, as a right eye, or right hand. Men are loth to pare off or abridge occasions of sin, where some strong interest binds them. But thus to go whole and sound to hell!—Oh! better limp to heaven.

Ver. 31, Then follows, of *divorce*, which, upon any difference, was worn into common use, and opinion of lawfulness. Afterwards, he speaks of usual *vain swearing*, a sin which men have always affected, even they who, by profession, are God's own people: at which a man might wonder, did not we find it so lamentably true. But yet, *Swear not at all*, not after the liberty you take by swearing either by heaven or earth, thinking thus you spare God's name; but swearing by them must have relation to God, and so his name is interested. But Oh! a little reverence for the great God would make thee tremble at it. Nothing is a stronger evidence of a graceless heart, than oaths and profane swearing.

Lastly, at ver. 43, we have that sweet doctrine of not revenging, but patiently bearing, and readily forgiving of injuries, and loving enemies, and doing good to all. This does not bar any calm way of self-righting, to which there is sometimes an obligation; but men over-stretch it, and passion and self-love domineer, under this pretext. Therefore, the words sound a little extreme, as a counter-bowing of our crooked hearts, but it is to bring them straight. Let Julian and other atheists laugh at it, but it is the glory of Christians. No doctrine or religion in the world presses so much clemency and innocency, and bounty as theirs, even to sworn enemies. This, we say, is its glory. And whereas it seems to render men sheepish, to make them less than men, it makes them indeed more than men, even like God. Benignity and mercy are Divine and Godlike, chief traits of God's image in his children. His sun rises, and his rain descends on the just and the unjust. So, a diffusive, sweet, bountiful soul is still desiring to do good, by hand, by counsel, by any comfort within its reach towards all, rewarding good for evil. These things, deeply thought on and really practised, would make Christians indeed, children like their Heavenly Father.

CHAPTER VI.

Christ's business upon earth was to bring man to Heaven. He came down, and became man, for that purpose; *came forth from God,* to *bring us back to God.* 1 Pet. iii. 18. As his life and death, so, his Divine doctrine tends to that, to enlighten the minds of men with the right knowledge, and inflame their hearts with the real love of God. We are drowned in sense and the love of earthly things; and in spiritual things, our hearts are sensual and earthly. Now you perceive the doctrine of this chapter, clearly aiming at the raising of men's

hearts to Heaven. That is the end of the Gospel and all preaching, that men may learn in all their actions to eye God more and man less; to be less earnest and careful for earth, and more for Heaven. This is the scope of the chapter.

These two main evils in the heart of man, hypocrisy and earthliness, spring from ignorance and forgetfulness of God. Deep persuasions of God and heavenly things would set men and earthly things very low in our hearts. Would it be possible for men to love the praise of men more than the praise of God, if they considered what He is, and what man is; how high and how lasting a good is His liking and approbation, how poor and vanishing a thing is man's good opinion? Oh, atheism, atheism! hence springs the love of present things. Both these go under that name, present esteem, and present possessions. The one, the love of air, (as I may say,) the other, the love of earth; and both spring from want of belief and love of Heaven, so high above both. This is the great work to call off the eye from this low prospect, to raise it up higher, to look *not on things seen, but on things not seen.* And Oh, the odds! *Things that are seen, are temporal; things that are not seen, are eternal.* 2 Cor. iv. 18. At this our Saviour aims his discourse, to persuade men to singleness of heart in their performance of religious duties, and moderation of mind in their provision for earthly necessities.

Having spoken of doing good in the former chapter, he speaks now of the manner and intention which is chiefly to be heeded, to exceed the Pharisees, who did many outward actions, particularly of these here specified, but spoiled all by the wretched desire of vain glory; a subtle evil preying most on best things, alms, prayer, &c.,—a moth that breeds in and corrupts the finest garments.

The duties he particularly names are these three, *Alms, Prayer, Fasting.* Alms I scruple not to call a religious duty, though of the Second Table, upon the apostle St. James's warrant, Jam. i. 27. And the way of it, which our Saviour here teaches, will make it religious indeed: to regard God in it,

not to seek to appear to man, yea, to seek not to appear to man; to hide and cover it all that thou canst from men. We are commanded, indeed, in the former chapter, to *let our light shine before men:* this here is not contrary, yea, *that* is the same with this: *this* barring vain self-glory, *that* directing to God's glory. *Let your light shine*, but *so* shine, (like the sun that gives light and scarcely suffers you to look upon itself,) *that they may see your works*, yourselves as little as may be, and *may glorify*, not you, but *your Heavenly Father.* Good actions cannot well be hid, and possibly, some even of this sort, giving of alms. Yea, sometimes it may be necessary for example and exciting others, that they should know of it. But take heed that vanity creep not in under this. And further than either unavoidable necessity, or some evident further good of thy neighbour carries it, desire to be unknown and unseen in this. When it must be public, let thy intention be secret. Take no delight in having the eyes of men on thee; yea, rather count it a pain, and still eye God alone, for He eyes thee. And remember it, even in public acts of charity, and other such like, *He sees in secret.* Though the action be no secret, the spring, the source of it is, and He sees by what weights the wheels go, and He still looks upon that; views thy heart, the hidden bent and intention of it, which man cannot see. So then, though in some cases thou must be seen to do, yet, in no case do to be seen: that differs much, and where that is, even the other will be as little as may be. Thou wilt desire rather, and, where it can be, still choose to do unseen, that others should know as little of thy charity as may be, besides the party that receives it; yea, if it might be, that even the party might not know,—as he that stole in money under his sick friend's pillow; yea, to let thy very self know as little as possible, as our Saviour here expresses it, *Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth.* An excellent word! Reflect not on it as thy action, with self-pleasing; that is the left hand in view; but look on God's goodness to thee, that thou art not in the receiver's room, and he in thine; that He makes

thee able to relieve another, which many are not, and being able, makes thee willing, which far fewer are. For both, thou art to bless Him, and be the humbler, the more thou dost. Take thy very giving to thy distressed brother, as a gift from God, a further obligation on thee. Though He is pleased to become thy debtor for a further reward, yet, truly, the thing itself is His gift, and a great one, as David acknowledges excellently in their offering to the Temple, 1 Chron. xxix. 14; *But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly, after this sort? For all things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee.* Not only the power, but the will is from God, both *of Thine own which we give Thee.*

Oh, how far are the most from this direct looking to God, this heart-enlarging love of God! And therefore are they so close-handed to the necessities of the poor, even of the saints, where some enforcing occasion, some eye of men, some wretched side respect or other, draws it not forth. A thousand objections are raised: either they need it not, or will not accept of it, or have this fault or that, are proud or idle, &c. But does not thy God see what is at the bottom of all this logic, these disputes before they come off with any thing? And when thou dost give, how much of self, and how little of God is there in it! The left hand knows, yea, it is done with the left hand, though the bodily right hand do it. Most men's charity is altogether left-handed: sinister respects and intentions are the main movers in it.

But how noble and happy a thing is a truly liberal heart! Even natural liberty hath much beauty in it, but much more that which is spiritual and Christian. According to thy power, abounding in good works, that is riches,—*rich in good works;* and *he that soweth plentifully, shall reap plentifully.* And be cheerful in it, and do this for God, out of love to Him. And for the fruit, how rich is that! So much as it is fit to look to reward, look to God's only. Take Him as thy debtor upon His word, rather than present payment from men.

Theirs is present indeed, and our carnal hearts are all for the present, but consider, as it is present, so it passes presently, and is straightway spent. God's reward, though to come, is yet certain, and when come, is abiding, everlasting. Thus, in respect of all good actions, and a holy self-denying course of life, in nothing take pay of men. How vain, what smoke is it, their breath, and how soon will it be spent! And then, when thou shouldst come to look for a reward from God, to know it is done, that you are paid already! That well judged, is one of the saddest words in all the scripture, the hypocrite's doom. He hath no more to look for; he would be seen, and was seen; he would be praised of men, and praised he was; he is paid, and can expect no further, but that reward which he would gladly miss, the hypocrite's portion, *eternal fire*.

As to *Prayer*, how foolish and wretched a thing is it, to speak to God, and look to men! What is there wherein the heart will be single and abstracted from men, and commune with God alone, if not in prayer!

Another evil, much like to that of shew, is here corrected, an affected, empty, babbling length in prayer, without affection. The want of that makes a short prayer long and babbling; while much of that makes a long prayer short: as in a speech, the quality is the measure of the quantity, a long speech may be very short. This affected length we incline to very much in holy exercises; many beads are dropped, and *paternosters* said, &c. We lay too much stress on the continuance and length; think all's well, if enough be done; whereas God's thoughts are far otherwise, ours should conform to his. It is enough if well done. If the heart is close to him in ever so short a prayer, there is much said in a little. We usually speak many words, and say little. For help in this, the most excellent model given by our Saviour is here inserted; the beautiful order and full comprehensive matter of which can never be enough admired.

Then as to *Fasting*, which is a necessary help of Prayer; it does unclog and free the wings of the soul to mount to

Heaven; and in some respects it is a help to alms too. The same rule must here be observed, to appear as little as may be; for the affected discovery spoils and loses all, yea, the needless discovery runs too much hazard, therefore it is by all means to be avoided. Personal fasting should be conducted secretly. Practise constant temperance. Better to let the bridle be always short held on thy appetite, than sometimes to pull it in extremely, and then lay the reins loose again; that is the way to stumble and fall in both.

Ver. 19. *Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth.*] In these words our Saviour enforces the other point of *moderation.* The heart in Heaven, and fixed on the true treasure there, is the only way to regulate and moderate the desires in all things on earth. For it is the distempered love of earthly things that causes all the distracting care about them; and the cause of that distempered love to earth, is ignorance of Heaven, and disaffection to it. Men may discourse of many considerations, and sometimes think soberly, how foolishly man turmoils, and *is disquieted in vain,* heaping up, and not knowing who shall possess, and knowing certainly that not he very long, that he is shortly to leave all. But these things will not prevail; men keep their hold. Not only their hands, but their hearts, are still fastened to what they have, and what they would have still more of, rather than of those excellent things which would call them off from earthly enjoyments, to fix them on Heaven and immortality, if these were really believed.

Where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal.] Inward decay, and outward hazards! The treasure *above* is free from both. Oh, that ours were there! But hearts that are so little there, make it very questionable. Oh, for an eye single and pure, enlightened to behold that blessed hope, and to fix upon it! Can an heir of Heaven be much troubled upon earth? Impossible. If at any time his heart bends that way, will he not straightly check himself, and think, What am I doing? Is this my business?

The Gentiles seek for them, and look for no more: they must make the best of them; but would I be content with this for my portion? Where lies my treasure? Who is my master?

Ver. 24—34. *No man can serve two masters.—Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life.*] Our Saviour here argues against the service of the world; first, as unworthy a servant of Christ; secondly, as impossible for him; thirdly, as needless, and that at large. *Your heavenly Father knows your need,* and cares for you. Ye need not both care; his care is sufficient. Further, it is fruitless: such your perplexing care is, for due diligence in one's calling is not barred; yea, that is to be used, that we may care the less. Then, it avails nothing. Ver. 27. *Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?* Lay these things together. Your Father will care and provide. He that clothes the lilies, and feeds the birds, will he allow his children to starve and go naked? Then think how preposterous and absurd to distrust him in these petty things, when you trust him in so much greater.

Ver. 33. *But seek ye first the kingdom of God.*] A kingdom! Oh, seek that, and account, as he does, all things else but accessaries, a parcel by the bye, to be cast in. But alas! little see we of that great inheritance, that kingdom, and therefore these little, poor things still seem so great with us.

CHAPTER VII.

We have here continued the dropping of the Divine doctrine of Christ, distilling as the dew in several brief rules, as pure pearly drops of heavenly wisdom, in divers particulars of main use and concernment.

First, there is a direction concerning judging of men,

ver. 1—6. Then, another, regarding the supplicating of God, ver. 7—11. After that, the straight rule of equity given us, ver. 12. And then, the straight way of happiness recommended, ver. 13, 14. Lastly, a double word of caution to undeceive us, both in the discerning of others' teaching, and our own learning, ver. 15—27: we are to beware that we be not deluded by false teachers, and that we delude not ourselves, being false learners under the teaching of truth. These are most weighty points; but light vain hearts are little taken with them.

Ver. 1—5. *Judge not, that ye be not judged.*] This is a most common evil in man's perverse nature. Even moral men have taken notice of it; yea, almost every man perceives and hates it in another, and yet hugs it in himself. This is the evil—unequal judging; sharp-sightedness in the evils of others, and blindness in our own. And this very evil itself, of unequal judging, we can perceive in another, and overlook in our own bosom. What discourse fills most societies, and consumes their time, but descant on the conditions and actions of others!

Lawful judgments in states, for the censuring and punishment of crimes, are not barred; nor, in private persons, a prudent discerning of what is evil and sinful in others, and judging accordingly of it. But this *judging* is, the usually taking the chair to censure all persons and affairs about us; the prying into the actions, yea, even the intentions of men, either through a false glass, seeing faults where there are none, or through a magnifying and multiplying glass, making them appear many more than indeed they are. This is done, first, by a curious searching into the actions of others; secondly, by the censuring of good and indifferent actions as evil; thirdly, by hasty, rash censuring of doubtful actions, though a little suspicious; fourthly, by a true censuring of evil actions, yet not with a good intention, not to amend but to defame thy brother; and, fifthly, by a desperate sentencing of the final estate even of the worst.

This is here declared to be dangerous and preposterous. 1st. *Dangerous*, by drawing an answerably severe censure and judgment upon ourselves, usually even from men, but however, certainly from God. Thou that playest the arch critic on all around thee, art thou without fault? Hast thou flattered thyself into such a fancy, as to think that thou art above all exception? Is there nothing, either a true or a seeming blemish, for any to point at in thee? Surely there is something, some part lying open, that men may hit thee; and they will surely not miss to do it, if thou provokest them. However, remember, if thou shouldest escape all tongues, and pass free this way, yet *One* unavoidable searching hand thou must come under; *His* judgment who sees thee to the bottom, and can charge thee with the secret sins of thy bosom. He can, and will so pay thee home, all thy unjust judgments of thy brethren, with just judging of thy ways and thoughts, that thou thyself shalt confess no wrong is done to thee. *For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged.*

Then, 2dly. It is *absurd* and *preposterous*. *First cast the beam out of thine own eye.* If thou wouldst, to any good purpose, take knowledge of thy brother's failings, begin at home; so clear thine eye as to discern aright. A heart well purified speaks the most suitable and pertinent reproofs, and they prove the most piercing and powerful.

Shall these things prevail, my brethren? Were it love to God, a fire of holy zeal, it would seize first on things nearest it; but it is a flying, infernal wildfire, running abroad and scattering itself. Is not this the grand entertainment? Such-a-one is a foolish person; another, proud; a third, covetous. And of persons professing religion, yet will ye say, They are as contentious, and bitter, and avaricious as others; or, at best, if you have nothing to say against them particularly, yet, All is dissimulation; they are but hypocrites. And while a mind is of this vein, believe me, the most blameless track of life, and in it the very best action, how easy is it to invent a sinister sense of it, and blur it!

But Oh! my brethren, be not so foolish. Blunt the fiery edge off your censures on yourselves, where it is so safe and advantageous to be thorough and home. Just the opposite to this, judging others incurs sharp judgment; but judging thyself, is the way not to be judged. 1 Cor. xi. 31. *For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.* This is the happy and gainful severity. Learn, then, to look upon others and all their ways, with the highest charity, which *thinketh no evil*, is witty and inventive of good constructions upon any thing that may clear them, as malice is of miscensures of the best things. Take all candidly and mildly by the easiest side, the right handle. And for thyself, search thy heart; sift, try thy best actions, find out thy own earthliness, thy pride and vanity, thy selfishness and hypocrisy even in good. A self-searching Christian is made up of humility and meekness. If thou wouldst find much peace and favour with God and man, be very low in thine own eyes. Forgive thyself little, and others much.

Ver. 6. *Give not that which is holy unto the dogs.*] The former rule abates the sharp eye of rash judging; this quickens and clears the eye of right discerning: that was for the moderate censuring of evil; this is for the prudent imparting of good. Be ready to communicate spiritual good to all, yet so as, if men do evidence themselves to be as dogs and swine, to have that high esteem of holy things, as not to prostitute them to their contempt and rage, and wrong both those excellent things and yourselves; *lest they trample them*, as puddled swine, not knowing their worth, *and turn again and rend you*, as enraged dogs.

Holy things—pearls. So are they esteemed by all that know them; the sweet precepts and promises of the word, the excellent high calling of a Christian; and their price is inestimable. *The pearl of great price is*, Jesus Christ, revealed in the Gospel. Oh, learn and seek after high esteeming thoughts of him and of Divine things. Learn to be rich in those, and to covet them indeed. And though imparting them to others,

it impairs them not to yourselves, and therefore you are to be ready and free that way; yet, because of some manifest despisers of them, learn this wisdom in that matter, *Give not holy things to dogs.*

There is an imprudent zeal, and sometimes a mixture of an irreverent commonness, in speaking of holy things indifferently in all companies. Certainly, such company willingly ought to be chosen, as give most liberal and kind entertainment to such discourse. But when not of choice, but by some unavoidable engagement, we fall among others, then our rule ought to be, not to partake of their ungodly ways and communication; but for the communicating in another way, holy things to them, this must be well advised on, whether it be suitable to this rule. We are not indeed to give persons easily up for desperate, as dogs or swine; this were to fall into the former fault of rash judging; but where they are evidently such, the respect of holy things is to be preserved, and not unwisely to be exposed to their derision.

Much need is there of a spirit of wisdom in this, without which there is no instructing by rules, so as to guide us aright in all particular occurrences and societies; therefore we are to beg that *anointing* that *teacheth us all things.* 1 John ii. 27. Speak willingly to God, but still with holy fear in thyself, and it may be entertained with holy fear to others.

Ver. 7. *Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened unto you.*] This is for advantage to all. For wisdom to follow the foregoing and following rules, the great purveyor of a Christian is prayer, and the great qualifications of prayer are *perseverance* and *fervency. Ask—seek—knock;* be earnest and importunate; give not over. And the great support, the very life of prayer, that which quickens and continues it, and keeps it from giving over, is *faith*, a firm persuasion of audience and attainment. This is here ascertained by our Saviour; proved by irrefragable argument. All good is promised to be given, and that which is the top of all, the chief to be sought, *the Holy Spirit,*

is promised *to them that ask it,* as St. Luke hath it. We say our prayers, and there is an end. And this perfunctorious formality creeps even upon Christians who are unwary and slothful, and hence so little is obtained. Many that pray, know little of this Divine art of prayer, this wrestling with God, this resolving not to let Him go until He bless them, as Jacob did.

Ver. 12. *Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.*] This is added, and seems connected, but it is another rule apart, and that great rule which all know and few observe,—in equity, in charity, meekness, and all due respect. Self, self undoes all, and sets the world on fire. Though it be a separate precept, yet it may have some aspect to the former respecting prayer, as, if you would have God condescending, and favourable, and bountiful to you, be so to men; and so you shall be, if you change places and suppose yourself in their room, and they in yours. *This is the law and the prophets:* that is, all is of this nature. Duty to others, as pressed in the Law and the Prophets, is reducible to this.

Ver. 13. *Enter ye in at the strait gate.*] This is undeniably a main point; yet, alas! we seem not to think so. How disinclined are we to the way of eternal happiness! The difficulty is so represented as to add an edge to our earnestness, not to abate and weaken our endeavours. This way is strait indeed, but there is still room enough within. John xiv. 2. *In my Father's house are many mansions.* The ease and delight there shall abundantly compensate all the trouble in the way. We must resolve then, if we would not perish, that we must take this way, how strait and rugged soever, and strip and put off all that entangles and encumbers,—that swelling pride, those superfluous desires and lusts; yea, to put off and leave behind even self itself. Once in at that gate, we shall find all perfectly compensated. And remember, they are few that enter; few there are that so much as seek it, but far fewer that find it, even of those that make some kind of seeking after it.

Many shall seek to enter (so it is in the other Evangelist), *and shall not be able;* therefore, *strive ye.* What bustle is there made by sea and land for scraps of this earth, and Heaven alone is so cheap in our eyes, as if it were worth no diligence, scarce even a serious thought! Surely, either Heaven is but a fancy, or the world is mad.

Ver. 15. *Beware of false prophets.*] Not to go wrong in our way, we must take heed not to mistake our guides (especially as so many in all ages give themselves out for such), that they mislead us not, wrapping error in truth's mantle: yet, there is ever something to a discerning eye, that will readily discover them. As for the grand deceiver, the Devil, the vulgar fable, that in all apparitions whatsoever there is still the shape of a cloven foot, holds true, for there is something in their carriage that, narrowly eyed, will tell what they are. *Ye shall know them by their fruits.*

Ver. 21. *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven.*] But every man is his own worst deceiver; therefore he ought most to be aware of himself. Whether teacher or learner, he is his own false prophet, *speaking peace where there is no peace.* Therefore, beware of yourselves. Delude not yourselves with a vain trust in an empty profession. *Not every one that says Lord, Lord* —that makes much noise and sound of the name of Christ, yea, that bears his name to others, that preaches him. Oh! how many shall find themselves to have misreckoned in that day, when they are not owned by Him, but commanded away by that sad word *Depart!* Look to it therefore, to the truth of denying yourselves, and your own will, and yielding yourselves up to God: *but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in Heaven,* says our Saviour. Oh! take heed of founding your house *in the sand.* Though ever so stately and fair built, and shewing fine, yet that foundation will be its ruin. There is no safe building but on the rock, *that Rock of Salvation* who here taught this doctrine. Then come storms as they will, there can be no fear. *He that buildeth on Him*

shall not be ashamed. 1 Peter ii. 6. No matter what houses or lands ye have here, whether any or none,—He himself had none here,—provided you build on Him as the foundation of eternal blessedness. Oh, that men would think of this, and amidst all their ensuring of things still unsure, would mind the making of this sure, which may be made so sure for ever as not to be moved!

Ver. 28. *And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine.*] A divine way of teaching! Even some not converted, are yet struck and astonished with it, but by this eminently, *He taught them as one having authority.* This not only by a powerful secret influence, on hearts which He touched by his Divine power, but even in the way of His own teaching. And for some measure of this, His ministers ought to seek, and to seek it from Him, if they would find it. There is a force in things spoken from the heart with holy and spiritual affection: even common things, thus spoken, are far above the greatest strains and notions, that are only an harangue or speech framed by strength of gifts and study. Oh! much prayer would put life and authority into what we speak. To be much on the mount with God, would *make our faces shine* when coming with His message to men.

CHAPTER VIII.

He *dwelt among us*, says St. John, *and we saw his glory, as the glory of the only begotten Son of God, full of grace and truth.* This all his history testifies of him, both his marvellous doctrine foregoing, and his miraculous works that here follow.

Ver. 1. *When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him.*] A thing he noways regarded, yet would not hinder; yea, he continued teaching and working

those things that drew them. His delight was not in their flocking after him, but in instructing and doing them good.

Ver. 2. *And behold, there came a leper and worshipped him.*] Whether this was intended as the highest kind of civil reverence, as to a prophet, or Divine worship, as to God, it is not easy to aver, because it is hard to determine what kind of persuasion he, and the centurion, and others now coming to him, had; how little, or how much, or if any apprehension of him as the Messiah and Son of God. This being as yet not much noised abroad, yet they might have it by special revelation from God. A high confidence, however, there was of a Divine power being with him for the greatest works. This is clearly expressed; and in whatsoever notion it was, our Saviour takes it very graciously, and grants their suits. We are commonly unsatisfied with all that comes not up to our own height; but our meek Redeemer cherisheth sincerity, and accepts of what he finds, even the very least, and extols it to the highest pitch it was capable of.

Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.] Strong confidence and humility are contempered in this word: confidence in asserting full power in Christ for the work; (the doubt of his will cannot be challenged as injurious or unbelieving, for he had as yet no warrant absolutely to believe that he would;) the humility in the way of propounding it, not daring peremptorily to sue for it, but moving it thus, as a thing in his hand to do; the sense of his vile disease and other unworthiness, it is likely, depressing him, and forming his desire in this style only, as representing and reserving the matter with humble submission, as resolved not to quarrel nor complain if he should refuse, but to acknowledge pure compassion and goodness, if obtained: q. d. Lord, it becomes not such a horrid, polluted wretch to say any further than this, I believe, and crave leave to say it out, *if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.*

Ver. 3. *And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him.*] And this humble motion is as graciously taken: he hath straightway real experience both of the power that he believed

in, and of the good-will that he durst not think himself so sure of, yet had (no doubt) some good hope of. Thou sayest, I can? I say, *I will: be thou clean.* And the touch of his hand is a concurrent sign of his goodness and condescension. That word had power enough alone, without the touch; yet it goes not alone, lest it should look like a disdain of touching. He is pleased, therefore, to put his pure hand to the defiled skin of this leper, being in no hazard to receive pollution by that touch by which the leper received a cleansing. And thus in his word he speaks to sinners, where he hath revealed his will together with his power; and that we may doubt it not, we may read it in his blood streaming forth for our cleansing. Yet if any one, out of a deep sense of his vileness, think, I know that he can cleanse me, but will he look upon such a one? Or, if he look, will he not straight turn away? Will he vouchsafe to touch my filthy sores, and apply his own precious blood for my cleansing and healing? Yes, *He will.* Speak it not as doubting, but as humbly referring the matter, thou mayest, even in the same style, say, Lord, I am filthy as ever any that came to thee, yet, *if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.* And thou shalt find that powerful cure from a word of his mouth, and a touch of his hand, that all thy scrubbing, and washing, and bathing in legal self-cleansings, could never have attained; and that not only as to the guiltiness, but likewise as to the power and polluting filthiness, of thy sin. And this is to be laid before him in the prevailings of lusts and sinful impurities: Lord, thou knowest how impossible it is for me, and I know how possible, how easy it is for thee, to cleanse me. And if thou shouldst say no more, lie before him, and look upward till he pity thee. If he be not changed from what he was, he *will* pity thee, and thou shalt find it.

Ver. 4. *And Jesus saith unto him, See that thou tell no man.*] This charge not to divulge the cure, besides our Lord's exemplary humility in avoiding noise, was that he might wait the fitter time of discovering himself, and because as yet it might rather hinder him: as Mark i. 45. The other Evan-

gelists tell us that the man kept not this injunction, wherein, though he was to be blamed, yet there is some excuse in part, from the ardent affection and overcoming joy that he could not well conceal. Nor are we sharply to inveigh against all the impertinences and imprudences of new converts, in their speeches and carriage in religious things, though they are to be admonished to study prudence. It is no wonder that so high a change does a little transport them beyond their bounds. The *shewing to the priest*, and *offering of the gift*, was both a respect to the Law, not as yet out of date, and a provision for a testimony for Christ, when it should be afterwards known that he had done it. This may be the meaning of that word, *for a testimony to them.* And it is not at all unlikely, that the restraint from publishing it to others was only till it should be first shewn to the priest, and approved by him as full cleanness, which, possibly, otherwise, out of envy to Jesus Christ, they might have denied, if it had been known and famed abroad as his work.

Ver. 5—9. *And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him.*] The history of the centurion had much of the like confidence and lowliness. He desired him but to say the word, no more being needful for the thing to be done, and no more fit to be desired of him who is addressed. *I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof.* They that spake for him, as St. Luke hath it, said, *He was worthy for whom Jesus should do this.* He, of a far different mind, sends by others what is here related as his own speech; they speaking what he put in their mouths, that he was not worthy of Christ's presence. His confidence of power in Christ's word to do the deed, he expresses by the resemblance of his own command over his soldiers. He himself being but one under others, was yet so readily obeyed by those under him; and he believed all diseases to be much more under the word of Jesus's command. So, indeed, they know his word, and so, also, he rebukes soul-diseases and they are gone, as the fever in the next history.

Oh! if we did but believe this and put him to it! For faith doth so, and in a manner commands him, as he doth all other things.

Ver. 10. *When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said unto them that followed, Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.*] This man was a stranger and a soldier, yet, it seems, a proselyte; and our Lord, receiving this as a kind of first fruits of the Gentiles, foretels upon it a plentiful harvest of them: *Many shall come, and the children of the kingdom be cast out.* Ver. 11. This is a harsh word to the Jews; and yet, thus often, the most remote and unlikely, who have long lived strangers to religion, have proved notable converts; and they that have lived from their childhood under a powerful ministry, and with persons professing religion, and have themselves been moulded into a form of it, yet die in their sins, and never lay hold of that salvation unto which they always seemed to be so near. And this near miss of happiness is the greatest misery. *Children of the kingdom* in outward appearance and church privileges, yet prove children of wrath, not only not entering into the kingdom they had a seeming title to, but *cast out* into the dungeon *of utter darkness!*

Observe the misery of the damned, resembled by *utter darkness*, void of light, and full of hideous noises and cries; *weeping and gnashing of teeth.* And the happiness of glory is resembled to a banquet, where there is full light and joy; a coronation banquet, where all the company of kings *sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God.* And this, and all other resemblances in Scripture, are but a dark shadow of that bright glory. Oh! were the things of eternity, the misery and the blessedness to come, indeed believed, how much would our thoughts be in them, and how little room would they leave for the trifles and vanities that our hearts are taken up with!

Ver. 14. *When Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever.*] He takes humble,

compassionate notice of all maladies where he comes, and is touched with the griefs of his own, and so moved as to touch and heal them. This king's *touch* cures all sorts of diseases: it did so while he walked in a low, despised condition on earth, and it does so still by that virtual Divine power, now that he is in heaven; and although his glory there is greater, his compassion is not less than when he was here; and his compassion always was, and is, directed much more to souls diseased, than to bodies, as they are better and more valuable.

Ver. 15. *And she arose and administered to them.*] Oh! thus it should still be; yea, thus it will be. They whom he cures, will bestow upon him the health and strength they have received by him, and shall be serviceable to him. How can it be so fitly and duly employed? Then are all deliverances and favours, outward and inward work, most kindly and sweetly enjoyed, when they are most quickly and entirely returned to their spring, all improved and offered up to Him from whom they come.

Ver. 16. *When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed.*] Upon the report of these works, they run to him in great numbers. Oh, that upon the report of his all-healing virtue published in the Gospel, sick souls were thronging about him! The others were welcome, but these would be much more so. Many came to him, and we hear of none who were turned away without help. *He cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick.* Oh, come hither, all ye that have anything that troubles you. Is it a lethargic, a dead benumbedness of spirit, or is it a fever, a boiling of passions or lusts, yea, is it, as it were, a kind of possession of an unclean or an unquiet spirit? Come forward: here is help for thee. He cured those here, *with his word.* Now that word of the prophet, here applied, (ver. 17) had its accomplishment in part, even in these works; in his suffering the importunity of the multitudes coming early and late, and suffering likewise the maladies he cured, by the tender compassion he felt in doing it. He is not a hard-

hearted, insensible physician; no, he is matchless in love and tenderness, feeling as it were *their* pains who came to him, till they were cured; and he still does feel the pains and groans of his own, on their sick beds. And yet, all this, his curing all these bodily evils, was but a pledge of the higher averring and fulfilling of the prophetical word. Our first disease stuck nearer to him by far, than those that he cured: he put on the pain of all our transgressions, the whole weight falling at once upon his back, as the Apostle renders it—*bare our sins upon his own body on the tree.* Now, of that wonderful way of curing, by bearing and transferring over upon himself our spiritual maladies and miseries, there could not be a fitter prelude and foresign, than this of healing diseased bodies. Sickness is one of the bitter and chief fruits of sin. Next to proper spiritual evils, none are more grievous, yea, none so much. It sits the closest, and the sense of it can least be shifted. Other things that are without a man, are capable of more easy diversion; fancy, or reason, may bear off much; but paining sickness will not be so lightly argued out: the demonstrations are very sensible and conclusive.

As in other things, so it is here; Health, the chief of temporal blessings, as much as anything, passes unesteemed and unconsidered while we enjoy it. But Oh! a fit of sickness makes it sweet, gives it the highest recommendation: the groans and plaints of a sick bed are the most powerful rhetoric to commend health. What can a man enjoy of all the pleasures and pomp about him, when blasted by one sharp pain seizing upon any part of him? Amidst all attendance and furniture, he thinks the poorest scullion in his house, that is in health, much happier than he for the time. Yet this we think not of, while we eat and sleep, and have tolerable health; consider not that continued mercy, how great it is; think not on the difference between that, and loathing of all food, weary, restless nights, and tossings to and fro until the morning.

Now I say, this considered, the goodness and power of

Jesus Christ were most fitly manifested in this way, as introductive to the great deliverance from sin and death he came to effect for us, by bearing them himself, in our stead, and so taking them away. And so, in cures afterwards, as you find in the next chapter, he began to let out somewhat of that, as the main: *Thy sins are forgiven thee.* And without this, what is health itself, though in its kind very precious, especially when so speedily and easily restored after sickness by a word or a touch? Yet, what had this been but a little reprieval, while the sentence of death, yea, eternal death, was still standing, and shortly to fall on? Oh! the lifting of that desperate sinking burden, our sins, and taking them upon himself for us! How far do all words, and, what is larger, all thoughts, fall short of the height of that love! Oh, boundless, immense love! It will take up eternity to consider it.

Ver. 18. *Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side.*] Other reasons may be imagined for his withdrawing from these, but it appears that his work now lay elsewhere, and he was to go through it. And the other Evangelists are express in this: *I must preach also to other cities, for for this came I forth.* He had much work, and a short time to perform it in; so he follows it diligently. Thus his servants ought to go or stay, indifferently, for all places and services, as they are called, and not to please others and themselves, but Him who sends them.

Ver. 19, 20. *And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus saith unto him, Foxes have holes,* &c.] Strange! Our Saviour seems to turn off the very ready and full offer of one, and to put forward another who drew back. He is, indeed, absolutely free in his choice, and may without control do this, let pass high temporary fits and offers, and lay hold on what hath far less appearance. And the truth is, he is privy to the secret actions of men's hearts, and can discern in some of a very plausible zeal and forwardness, some false principles within, whence it is kindled; and in others more slow and inactive,

sees under that, more sincerity at the bottom. This scribe, possibly, taken with the splendour of Christ's miracles, and the flocking of multitudes unto him, perceived not his present poverty and meanness, and after disgraces and sufferings. Many make lavish offers to religion at a time when it is in request, or possibly upon some discernment of its own worth and beauty, but do not count the cost; consider not the enmity of the world, the outward meanness, the reproachings and despisings that usually attend it. It is indeed by far the best bargain with all those who count the cost, if men would understand it right, and think it so ere they engage in it.

Now we see what condition Christ, who was Lord of all, chose for our sakes, amidst his own to live as a stranger, having no property, not so much as the beasts and the birds. *He became poor to make us rich*, 2 Cor. viii. 9; not rich in those things he was poor in, but in things infinitely better. In that, he calls his followers, most commonly, to a conformity with himself: he forbids not, indeed, property and possessions, but surely we should learn amidst all to walk, in affection at least, like him, as strangers here, not glued to anything, *using the world, as though we used it not.* And they who are really thus as he was, Oh, what comfort have they in this! How is it sweetened to them, if in that condition they indeed follow him! Hast thou no dwelling of thy own, no possession, and little for present supply? Look up to Him who passed through here in that very same way, and cleave the closer to Him; so much the more eye Him as thy riches and portion, and thou needest not envy kings in their best days. And whatsoever be thy estate, how soon shall it be past! And all that live, have much a like space of earth to lie down in at last. But Oh, the rich inheritance above, for all that lay hold on it, and follow our Lord Jesus Christ by the way.

Ver. 21. *Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.*] Now the other craves a delay. And a world of such excuses there are. They that will not give Christ an absolute refusal, yet, have somewhat first to be done. This match, or bargain,

or purchase, or at least a time civilly to take farewell of friends; and thus the most shift it off. But as to those whom he resolves to have, he will not take their refusal. *Let the dead*, says he, *bury their dead.* There are enough of common persons, who have no share of life in me, they may do that; *Follow thou me.* Oh! happy they whom he will not loose; whom he powerfully, yet sweetly constrains to break from all and follow him! Sure I am, it shall never repent them.

Ver. 23—27. *And being entered into a ship, there arose a great tempest.*] Still new occasions, and accordingly, new evidence, of the Divine power of Jesus Christ. Upon the ship wherein He is, there may, and usually does, arise a storm; yet, happy is it to be embarked with Him upon all hazards! His ship may be tossed, but perish it cannot. His counsels are deep and wise, and we cannot find them out. He knows what He is about to do, when we can least understand Him. When we think that He leads out His people to be swallowed up in the sea, or destroyed in the wilderness, He is only raising a mount for Himself to be seen on, and bringing them into the view of dangers, yea, of apparent ruin, to be more glorious in their deliverance. *His way is in the deep, and His footsteps are not known. Canst thou by searching find out God?* says He in Job. Which is not, I conceive, so much meant of His essence, as of His operations and ways; which are so profound and untraceable. We are at a stand often to think what He means to do; whether He has given up His Church and cause to the winds and waves, when His enemies rage and roar, and He is silent, as if He cared not what became of all. The seas swell, the ship is tossed, and He sleeps.

Not to speak here of Christ putting on our natural frailties, or of this sleep, whether it was natural or voluntary; it might be and likely was both: wearied with the concourse of the multitude on the land, he falls asleep in the ship; yet, doubtless, he had the command of those natural inclinations in himself, and chooses now to sleep, to increase the appearance of the danger, and add horror to the visage of it. So no doubt

it did: not all the blustering of the winds, nor the rising of the waves, was so frightful and sad to the disciples, as that their Master slept so sound in the midst of them; so sound as if rocked asleep by them, and either wholly insensible, or very regardless of their danger: as St. Luke expresses their feelings, *Carest thou not that we perish?* Now, in this man who slept, dwelt God who sleeps not, *The Watchman of Israel*, who does not so much as *slumber*. But they, either not so clearly understanding, or, in the fright, not so duly remembering and considering this, were eyeing only the posture wherein he was visible to them; therefore, the sounder he slept, it awaked and increased their fear the more. And as Jesus Christ here really did, even so God seems sometimes to His own to do; and they express it so. Thus the Psalmist: *Awake, arise, why sleepest Thou, O Lord?* This He seems to do, when the ungodly prosper, and when His people lie trodden under foot, and He seems to take no notice of their pressure, nor stirs for their deliverance. And this is the saddest part of their affliction: they have no hope nor stay, but in the favour and protection of their God; now when that is retired, and the curtain drawn, and He asleep, their prayers not heard, and no appearance of His help, I say, it is a grand trial of faith, which shakes and disquiets more than all other things, how terrible soever. No rage or noise of the enemy is so grievous as the silence and sleeping of God. Thus, in a soul, when lusts and temptations are swelling and raging, and God is retired, and as asleep to it, says nothing, controls them not, but suffers them to take their course; this is that which breeds the highest anguish, and brings a soul to the mouth of the pit, to the brink of desperation. Then it is forced to cry for a word from his mouth: Lord Jesus, speak but a word; keep not silence to me, or I am undone; there is no recovery for me; if thou keep silence I am dead: *I shall be like them that go down to the pit;* or, as it is here, *Save, Master, or we perish.*

And this is one main end for which he does sleep, to awake

us, to rouse and stir our prayers, which commonly are in times of ease, heavy, drowsy, lifeless things, as a man's speech in sleep, dreaming, incoherent, senseless stuff. This they may be to God, who hearkens to what the heart says in them, though to man's ears the words may be fit and good sense. But by the straining of a sharp affliction, or near pressing danger, the heart is awaked and speaks itself. Such a word seems to sound in its ears, as that of the mariners to Jonah, *Arise, thou sluggard, and call upon thy God.* Men do but trifle in fair weather, but in the storm they are more in earnest. Especially a soul acquainted with God, that follows and relies upon Him, will take this course and no other: it runs straight to Him, and if He be asleep, awakes Him. And in this they are to be approved and commended, that, as here, their course is to Jesus Christ, as confident of his power and willingness to deliver them. This the disciples did believe; otherways they had not left working for themselves, to go to awake him.

Yet was there, with their faith, a mixture of distempered, distrustful fear, which Jesus well knew, and which he would not otherwise have charged them with. He doth not altogether deny that there was faith in them, but checks the deficiency of it: *O ye of little faith, why did ye doubt?* Apprehend danger and fear, they might; yea, if they had not, they would not have come to Christ in that manner. Without a living sense of distress or danger, there can be neither faith nor prayer. These are stirred up and raised to act, by the knowledge and feeling of our need of help. But the misery is, we scarcely in anything know our bounds: our passions raised, do usually overflow and pass the banks. A little fear does but awake faith, but much fear weakens it, and in the awakening gives it too great a blow, such a one as astonishes it, and makes it stagger. That they were afraid, was tolerable; but their hearts, it seems, were not so established in the persuasion of Christ's Divine power and care of them, as became them; and this he plainly, yet gently, checks. And there is this alloy of distrust with believing, not only in the weaker,

but even in the strongest Christian; and there is a continual wrestling betwixt them; sometimes the one is uppermost, and sometimes the other; but faith, in the end, shall have the victory. See what strange difference there was betwixt Job and Job:—Would one think it were the same person?—one while cursing his birth, and wishing for death, and yet, afterwards declaring, *Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.* And again, afterwards, complaining, *Wherefore hidest Thou Thy face, and holdest me for Thy enemy?* And yet anon, again, *I know that my Redeemer liveth.* This they should think of, who doubt because they doubt, and multiply distrust upon itself, concluding that they have no faith, because they find so much and so frequent doubting within them. But this is a great mistake. Some doubtings there may be, where there is even much faith; and a little faith there may be, where there is much doubting. But, upon this account, is doubting by any means to be entertained or favoured? Yea, it is to be hated and opposed with all our strength, and the strength of God must be implored to overcome it, as the grand enemy of our peace and His glory. By all means is faith to be cherished, and distrust to be checked. Our Saviour pardons it in his disciples, yet he blames it. He refuses not his help, yet he blames their unbelief. *O ye of little faith!* He requires, and delights in a strong, firm believing on him, though the least and weakest he rejects not.

Having first rebuked their fear, he rebukes the storm that caused it, and makes a calm, *a great calm.* No wonder that they wondered at it: though they had seen many of his works, and were now expecting somewhat of this from him, yet it surpasses their expectation, and strikes them into admiration, to see a man, a man subject to weariness and sleep, and yet, that man awaking to still the wind and seas with the word of his mouth. Oh! the greatness of the Lord whom we serve, the sovereign of sea and land, commanding all with a word, desperate diseases, blasting winds, raging seas, and tormenting devils!

And there was a great calm.] This often happens in his Church, after such storms as threatened shipwreck. And so in a soul, when all within (and these are the worst storms) is full of confusion and noises, the heart working like a troubled sea, and finding no rest, neither from its own persuasions, nor the skilfullest speeches of others, but, amidst all, likely to be swallowed up or split in pieces; then, then one word from Christ's mouth quiets all presently, and makes the soul calmer and smoother than the stillest water in the fairest day. Oh, what wonder and love will possess the soul that hath found any such thing!

Ver. 28—34. *And when he was come to the other side, into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils.*] The following history hath many things of very useful remark; but those things offer themselves to all that read it. We may see the great malice of Satan, and the great power and goodness of Jesus Christ, and the great baseness and brutishness of the men of this place, here spoken of. Satan's malice appears in the men possessed, carrying them to run wild amongst tombs, and to commit outrage upon them who passed by, and then, apprehending their dispossession hence, to desire to go into the swine of that place, and destroying them, which was their design upon the men, as the event proved. He who had the power, and graciously used it, to cast them out of the possessed men, was not tied to their suit as a point of capitulation. He could have cast them quite out of their coasts, and sent them back immediately to their own prison; but in Divine wisdom and justice, he grants their suit, knowing well what use they would make of it, and what would follow.

But Oh! the Gadarenes themselves were the swine, viler than those the devils entered and drowned; yea, they were worse possessed than the swine, and drowned in a more fearful deep, by the craft of those devils. And that was their plot. The devils, knowing how fast the hearts of the owners were linked to their swine, thought it likely that the swine being

drowned, they would follow, would drown themselves in the rejecting of Jesus Christ. And they did so. How many who read or hear this with indignation, yet, possibly, do little better in their hearts,—cleaving to their herds, or other goods, gains, or pleasures, or any thing of this earth, and in the love of these, refusing Jesus Christ! Think it not a harsh word, but take heed ye be not such; for of the multitudes to whom Christ is offered, there are very few whose hearts do really open to him, and receive him. But Oh, happy they that do! This was the clearest instance of perfect misery, and yet they were scarcely at all to be pitied, being the choosers and devisers of it themselves: *They besought Jesus to depart*, that is, besought life and blessedness to go from them. And what does a sinner, when he turns out and rejects motions and inspirations of holiness, lest his lusts and pleasures of sin should be lost, but dismiss Jesus, lest the swine should be drowned?

CHAPTER IX.

Ver. 1. And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city.

He who measures the waters in the hollow of His hand, and commands them, (as ch. viii. v. 26,) is ferried over in some boat or small vessel. And was it not richly laden with this inestimable Pearl, *all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, all fulness* dwelling in Him? All the rich ships from both the Indies were not to be compared with this.

Ver. 2. *And behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy.*] The other Evangelists tell with what difficulty they did so, and how they overcame that difficulty with resolution and industry, which indeed overcome all. A strong bent towards Jesus Christ will not be hindered. Nor is their violence in uncovering the house, or their rudeness in interrupting

his discourse, rejected or reproved, but all is accepted for the principle, *faith*, which was tempered with love to the sick, and even to Jesus Christ, as the person from whom they expected the cure.

And Jesus seeing their faith.] It is needless to dispute that one may be benefited by the influence of another's faith. Surely, much may be done by it. Thus, it may bring and present a person, may recommend, may pray for him, and may be respected in the grant of mercy, not only in temporals, but in spirituals. But yet, *the just* lives only *by his* own *faith*, which no doubt this poor man had. For the word, *theirs*, excludes not, but rather includes the sick man's, who no doubt consented to this course in the same confidence. But yet, it is good to be in believing people's company. Another person, a family, a city, a society, may fare the better for the faith of an individual. Often, one who prays in a family, averts judgments, and draws down blessings upon the whole.

—*Said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee.*] This, though not appearing to be the errand, was yet the most important part of the cure, the root of blessing and blessedness, removing the root of all care and misery. Whether the sick man did most of all, or did at all desire or expect this at the hands of Jesus Christ, we cannot tell; but if he thought not of it, (and we see no other,) Oh, what a surprise of love! It is good, coming to Jesus on any terms, on any errand. Some come, driven by outward afflictions, and yet return delivered from sin and eternal death. In this respect, there is great variety in this matter of declaring a pardon. Some seek and knock, and wait long, and hear it not. Others are prevented, who scarcely sought it, but Christ's first word to them is this. But all is one as to the main: they who seek it with sorrow, shall be sure to find it with joy; and they who first find it without previous sorrow, shall yet be sure to find that sorrow for sin, in some measure, likewise, after pardon, if not before. And truly, it seems sweetest and kindliest, when mercy melts the heart. But well

may He say, *Be of good courage*, who could add this, *Thy sins be forgiven thee.* Oh! what can dismay after this? The heart, wholly filled with Divine peace and love, bears up all, and sorrow is turned into joy before a soul thus assured. Jesus knew well, that the healing of his palsy, without this pardon, had been but a lame cure, only the half, and the far less, the meaner half. This was the main business that brought him down from Heaven to be a man, and to dwell among men, and that made him die for man; that which nailed him to the cross, and drew forth his heart's blood: it was for the remission of the sins of many. These cures of bodily diseases, though clear demonstrations of Christ's divine power and goodness, were but a transient appendage and symbol of that mainly intended and highest mercy, *the forgiveness of sins.*

The sentence of eternal death standing in full force above the head of an unpardoned sinner, if it were lively apprehended, Oh! what a paralytic trembling would it strike the soul into, causing the joints of it to shake and smite one upon another, in the midst of its fullest health and mirth, as the hand-writing on the wall did that drunken king Belshazzar. But we know not what sin is, though we hear and speak of it, and sometimes confess it; and therefore our hearts leap not at the report of a pardon, though we hear of it, and usually entreat it. Any of you, when complaining that you are robbed, or spoiled of your goods, would scarcely think it to the purpose were I to tell you, *Your sins are pardoned.* But, Oh, how fit a word it is to answer and drown all griefs; so pertinent that nothing besides it is so! And happy that soul that hears it from His mouth who gives it and who alone can ascertain it. This is the answer that will satisfy. If thou sayest, "I am diseased;" ay, but thy sin is pardoned. "I am poor;" ay, but thy sin is pardoned. And surely, a soul that heeds it right will be quieted, and will be bold, *of good courage*, as the word here is, and will embrace all other burdens, and go light under them; will say, Lord, now let me live, or let me die, let me abound or want, let me be healthy or sick, take away what

thou wilt, or lay on what thou wilt, all is well; Thou hast pardoned my sin.

Ver. 3. *And behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth.*] Supposing Jesus but a man, yet, there was no necessity for this construction. He was a holy man, a singular, extraordinary man, doing unparalleled miracles; and he said not, *I forgive thy sins*, but, *Thy sins are forgiven thee;* which was a word not beyond the capacity of a prophetical power to say it declaratively. And though there was an air of authority, might they not have thought, This may be the Messiah, who they knew was to come, and was to be the Son of God, and to bring remission of sins along with him? But that base spirit, the spirit of envy, with which they were filled, willingly rejects all better sort of constructions, and fastens on the absolutely worst it can invent. To an eye that looks through the dark glass of prejudice and malice, all is discoloured. Yet they are struck with so much awe, that they dare not speak it out. That which struck them was, they were obscured by his brightness. They were *animalia gloriæ*, as one calls the philosophers, and could not endure to go less in the opinion they had gained: a sore mischief, and one much attaching to known and venerable possession. *Genus irritabile vatum.*

But a spirit devoted to HIM whose due all glory is, willingly resigns it to Him, in what way He will. Let whoso will be best or chief, so that still He be chief of all, and glorified in all. The holy Baptist had another spirit than these rabbies: he told it freely and gladly, *He must increase, but I must decrease.* It was his end, as the morning star is willingly drowned in the brightness of the rising sun.

Ver. 4. *And Jesus knowing their thoughts.*] This, without any thing further, was clearly enough to demonstrate his Divine power. Oh! that this was ever in our thoughts, that all our thoughts are under his eye! If they were so, and we knew them to be so, to some grave, wise man, how wary, and choice should we be of them! And shall we have less regard to the

holiest and wisest Lord, to whom they are all naked and open?

Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?] There was no reason in the thing, but the reason was, their hearts were evil, and their emissions like themselves. An evil heart is an incessant forge of evil thoughts. It is a corrupt spring still issuing forth, and till it be renewed, it cannot find any other. *From the heart come evil thoughts:* that is in the front of all the black train that comes forth of the heart, as our Saviour teaches, Matt. xv. 19. These are the seeds of all the wickedness that fills the world. Chief regard, therefore, is to be had to the *heart.* An excellent advice that of Solomon, *Keep thy heart with all diligence.* To amend some evil customs, without the renewing of the heart, is but to lop the branches that will grow again, or others in their stead; but a holy heart meditates on holy things, is still in heaven, is all reverence towards God, and meekness and charity to men.

Ver. 5. *Whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Arise, and walk?*] Though the remission of sins flows originally from the same power, and so is equal, and in its own place hath the preference, being by far the greater mercy, yet, the other of bodily cure runs into the senses, and so both is more evident to the beholders, and affects them more. The other word might be spoken with less control, the efficacy or inefficacy of it not falling under the cognition of them that heard it; but this of healing the palsy would either be attested or denied in the effect.

Ver. 6. *But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins.*] Now he asserts a peculiar power of forgiving sin. Though a man walking on the earth as the rest, yet, in testimony of the Divine power, *He saith to the sick of the palsy,*—this apostrophe maketh the proof more lively, joining presently the real experiment of that miraculous cure,—*Arise, take up thy bed.* That word which gave being to the world, what is hard to it? And in the case of spiritual deadness, soul-palsy, no more is necessary than a word from

His mouth, and it shall be lively and strong; it shall skip and *leap*. Is. xxxv. 6. Lord, speak that word! And indeed, wheresoever he pardons sin, He withal makes the soul able and nimble, to *run in the way of His commandments;* to carry its head, that before carried it; to command and wield at pleasure those low things whereon it rested.

Ver. 8. *But when the multitude saw it they marvelled.*] *They feared*, says St. Luke. A gracious work it was, yet, so full of wonder, that it struck them with a kind of fear. *And they glorified God.* Thus shall he break out, and shine bright in His works, when most opposed by evil men. Yet, they knew him not well, but took him for an extraordinary man only. But thus he was pleased to be known by degrees, and to rise as the morning light. It is a common presumption, and generally that of the least knowing, to think that they have the true and full sense of the articles of religion; and that presumption is commonly accompanied with this precipitancy, that we would constrain all to know and believe, at once, without delay, whatsoever we think and believe. *Who had given such power unto men.* But had they known this honour given unto men, that this man was God, they would have wondered much more. And if he was so astonishingly wonderful in healing a sick man, how wonderful shall he be in raising the dead! And if in his lowness his power was admired, how much more shall all admire that power which shall then be given him, when the *man, Christ*, shall come in the brightness of his glory, to judge the world!

Ver. 9. *And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom.*] He staid no long time upon earth, but he lost no part of that time. Every step to us is a wonder of goodness. And here is a cure which the Evangelist ingenuously relates as done upon himself, which was no less, if not more wonderful, than that performed upon the paralytic; and done as easily and quickly by the same means, a word spoken.

He saw a man named Matthew. He loves first, and spies

first, when we think on nothing less than him; as he says to Nathanael: *Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee.* And this seeing of Matthew was no casual, but a designed sight, proceeding from a former sight, like unto that of Nathanael; and is the sight of His fore-knowing and fore-choosing love. So even this very sight of his calling and converting power did prevent Matthew, while he thought of no such thing, and would have let Jesus pass, being so intent upon his busy employment, as either not to have seen him at all, or to have taken no notice of him.

Sitting at the receipt of custom. This is the common case, the posture of called sinners. While they are thinking of no such thing, but altogether drowned in other desires and cares, (even at the church, their hearts are often more in their shops, or fields, or any earthly business they are engaged in,) their very hearts being a little custom-house, such a crowd and noise of cares and vanities, as there is usually of people in a custom-house, He who hath their names in His book of life, at His appointed time glances at them, by a powerful look cast on them, and, by a word spoken to them, draws them to Himself; and that without minding any previous worth or congruous disposition in them, more than in others; yea, finding them in a more indisposed temper and posture, possibly, than many others who are not called, as the Evangelist here freely and humbly declares of himself, speaking out his calling, and his busy diligence in it, in the very instant that he is called from it. Observe, likewise, his expressing of his common name, Matthew; whereas the other Evangelist, in the recital of this story, gives him that other name which was the more honourable, Levi. *Sitting at the receipt of custom,* a profession of great gain, but little credit among the Jews; and though, possibly, not utterly unlawful in the nature of it, yet, so generally corrupt in the exercise and management of it; like some other callings, which though a man cannot absolutely determine them to be unlawful, are yet seldom or never lawfully and spotlessly discharged. Therefore, the Jews shunned the very

society of publicans (tax-gatherers) as a wicked, execrable kind of men, and did in a manner necessitate them to converse with the worst sort of persons, as being expelled and generally avoided by all others; so that you find them here, ver. 10, and usually in the Gospel, linked together, *publicans* and *sinners*, that is, noted, nefarious sinners, such as harlots, and other scandalously vicious persons. Yet from this stained and ill-reputed calling, is Matthew called by the holy Lord, to follow him. As he called poor fishermen, and made them *fishers of men*, to catch men, to save them by their net spread, the word of life preached, so, he calls a rich publican to be a gatherer-in of his tribute and treasure in the world, the souls of chosen sinners, by the publication of the Gospel.

No rank of men is so low, as to be below the condescension of His choice and grace; and none are so remote, in the reputed or real iniquity of their station or person, as to be without the extent and reach of His saving hand. And He is pleased to give instances of this in choosing whom He will, and making them what He will, that *no flesh may glory before Him*, but that all flesh may glorify Him, whom no unworthiness or unfitness can prejudice, either in the freedom of His grace in choosing them, or in the power of His grace in changing the mind and fitting them for what He calls them to. He hath no need, nor takes notice of our rules, nor judges according to our thoughts. Not only have we here a publican, but afterwards a persecutor, made a most eminent preacher and apostle of Jesus Christ. And His choice and calling wipes out the stain of all preceding sin, though the persons themselves do readily acknowledge it on all occasions, as St. Paul often does, and St. Matthew does here. And indeed it is sincerity and humility for them who are converted, at a great distance of time so to do. But for others to object to them after their conversion, either the meanness or the sinfulness of their former lives, were great uncharity and folly: it were to reckon up to men that which God hath blotted out, who alone is interested in the account.

Herein God is wonderful, who seizeth on some persons in the midst of youthful dissipations, or violent pursuits of the world, and purifies them for Himself; makes them not only vessels of honour, but of the first rank, to bear His name to others; makes them eminently holy, gives them great abilities, and, which is the top of all abilities, ardent love, and mighty affection for His service. His spirit, that holy fire, refines gross earth into the pureness of transparent glass, to be the inlet of light to His people.

Now, why is this one taken from the custom-house, and so many others left, both there and elsewhere, round about him? This is *arcanum imperii*, a *state secret;* no reason is to be expected but His good pleasure. Why is such a poor creature in a cottage chosen, and great palaces passed by? Why are simple and unlettered persons taught the mysteries of Heaven, and great wits left to evaporate themselves upon vain loves, and other like follies? Why in the same house is one chosen and called, and it may be a servant, and the rest passed by? Nothing can be given in answer but this; *Even so, Father, because it pleaseth Thee.*

And he saith unto him, Follow me.] I am not of the mind of a grave interpreter who thinks there were other words added to persuade him, though not related. I am somewhat confident that there was no more said at all, this being our Saviour's usual word of calling others in the same way, and so powerful a word, and of such mighty influence, that there was no resisting it. *He arose, and followed him.* No chains so strong to hold an earthly mind, as those of gold and silver. He was here in the midst of them, and very heavy ones they were, no doubt; yet, the word makes the soul break loose with a marvellous force from all. Some apprehend, (as well they may,) there was an attractive power in the amiable Jesus who here called him; but surely the word had of His Divine power in it, and reached the heart, and could not be resisted, and drew more strongly than all the receipts, and gains, and involved business of his profession, which could not hold him back. So Elijah but

cast his mantle upon Elisha in passing, and he followed. *What have I done to thee?* said he. Nothing to look at, yet enough to constrain him to leave all and follow him. So it is in the conversion of any sinners; no weights nor bolts can hold them: they must follow a commanding word, such as that which, in the creation, causes that to be that it commands; a magnetic touch of Jesus Christ, speaking in a word to the heart, so that it must follow him. Oh! happy souls that have felt it!

Ver. 10—13. *And as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came, and sat down with him and his disciples.*] The other Evangelists tell that it was in Matthew's house, and at a great feast which he made; this himself does not mention. This feast he made both as a respectful entertainment to his new Master, and as a civil farewell to his old friends and fellow-publicans; and possibly he took the confidence to invite them together with Jesus Christ, hoping that his presence and company might have likewise some happy influence upon some of them; and it is likely divers of them came uninvited, out of a desire to see Jesus, having heard of this his sudden and powerful withdrawing of one who, no doubt, was a prime man amongst them. However, the mild and gracious Jesus refuses neither the feast nor the company, condescending to the most ordinary customs of life, and in these things affecting nothing of austerity or singularity; and he chose this compliant way as most suitable to his design: *He became like us in all things, excepting sin.*

But all along, the spirit of pharisaical envy follows him, and lies at the catch for an advantage. Here it seemed fair for them. They accost not himself with it, but his disciples, hoping more easily to unsettle them of their opinion of their Master: How is this? He calls you to follow him as to some eminent way of sanctity, and leads you unto feasting and good cheer, and that with the refuse and impurest sort of men, *publicans and sinners.* Jesus takes on him the answer, as alone able to give it home. Why? What wonder you to see me in such company? Why, where should a man be, but where

his business lies? Were it strange to find a physician in a hospital or infirmary, or any where amongst the sick? Here is my work and great employment; and you might have read a word applicable to this purpose: *I will have mercy and not sacrifice;* that is, rather than sacrifice, or any ceremonial observance, such as this you urge, of abhorring the society of such persons, substantial goodness and duties of compassion and love. And instead of squinting on what you see, go think on this. You have read it likely, but do not well understand it; study better what it means. Meanwhile know this, that I am prosecuting the great design of my coming into the world, while I am in such company. *I came to call not the righteous, but sinners to repentance.* Not the righteous; either them that conceit themselves such, as you do, or any that are really converted already and religious. My present business is not so much with them, as to restore the ungodly, *to call sinners to repentance.*

I will not now speak of the rules and qualifications of using or avoiding the converse of unholy persons: but doubtless, there lies much, we shall find, as in this instance, in the due consideration of the persons on both sides, what hope there may be of reclaiming them, and what safety of not being corrupted by them, lest, while we think to pull them out of the mire, they drag us into it. Here there was none of that danger at all, and there was the highest power for converting; and the persons even by coming so willingly where he was, seem not to have been the most obstinate and incorrigible. But we should reflect well on ourselves in this case, that our intention be suitable to this, and that we be in some measure hopeful to be able to accomplish, before we attempt such a thing: otherways it will prove fool hardiness, to adventure much of this kind.

But this is the great comfort of sinners, this word: *I came to call not the righteous, but sinners.* What can a diffident heart say, that it should not come to Jesus Christ? Art thou

a sinner, an eminent sinner? Therefore come to him, for he came to thee. It is such that he comes to seek; they are the very objects of his grace. He had nothing else to do in the world, but to save such; he came on purpose for their sakes. His very name tells it: *He shall be called Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.* It is so far from being a just hinderance, that it is the only title to his favourable intentions, that thou art a sinner. Were it not strange if one should say, I am sick, very sick, therefore I will not make an address to the physician? And to say, I am a sinner, and a great one, therefore I dare not go to the Saviour of sinners,—would be equally strange. Oh, no, therefore I will go; he came for me; I am sure he is able to heal me—ought to be the language of all such.

But though this is great encouragement to sinners, it is no encouragement at all to sin. He came to call sinners, but it is to call them to repentance. This the whole gospel, and all the doctrine of grace, still presses. If thou bring thy sins to Jesus Christ, as thy malady and misery, to be cured of them, and delivered from them, it is well: but to come with them as thy beloved darlings and delight, thinking still to retain them and receive him, thou mistakest him grossly, and miserably deludest thyself. He came forth from God, to restore souls to God, in order to make us *partakers* of his *Divine nature.* The great intendment of the blessed Jesus, and the great redemption he wrought is, to separate our hearts and sin. We know him not, if we take it otherways. And this says clearly, that though he hath come to us, and stretched forth his hands long amongst us, few of us are come to him. Oh! how few have trod on the neck of their beloved sin, to come to Jesus Christ! This is the great deplorable wretchedness of the land; not the losses and ravages of war, not the loss of civil liberty, or any thing else that way; this is it, Unrepentance. We turn not by being smitten with the sharpest rod: we turned not by being invited with tender mercies. Look on such as

have been suffering at home, or wandering abroad; what change has been wrought on our hearts? What imports who do, or do not, rule over us, while our unworthy lusts and passions still do? If spoiled and poor, and without Christ too, then we are poor indeed; Oh, pitiful poor! Yea, if thou escape many things that light sadly on others, yet, if thou hast not escaped the dominion of sin, and that curse of death that cleaves to it, O wretched caitiff! Think what Jesus came and died for, what we live for, and what is our great business on this earth; that our sins should die before us. He came to call the earthly to heavenly mindedness and heavenly conversation; to call the unclean to purity; to call the passionate and furious to meekness; to call the proud to humility. Oh, answer this call. Give Him the desire of His heart, and He will certainly give thee thine.

SERMONS.

SERMON I.

PREFACE.

MANY and great are the evils that lodge within the heart of man, and they come forth abundantly both by the tongue and by the hand, yet the heart is not emptied of them; yea, the more it vents them outwardly, the more they increase within. Well might He who knows the heart so well, call it an *evil treasure*. We find the prophet Ezekiel, in his eighth chapter, led by the Lord in vision to Jerusalem, to view the sins of the Jews who remained there in the time of the captivity: when He had shewed him one abomination, He caused him to dig through the wall, to enter and discover more, and so directed him several times, from one place to another, and still said, *I will shew thee yet greater abominations*. Thus is it with those whom the Lord leads into an examination of their own hearts, (for men are usually strangers to themselves,) by the light of His word, and His Spirit going before them; He lets them see heaps of abominations in every room, and the vilest in the most retired and darkest corners. And truly, should He leave them there, they would despair of remedy. No, He makes this discovery on purpose that they should sue to Him for help. Do so then, as many of you as have taken any notice of the evils of your own hearts. Tell the Lord, those hearts are His own work: *He formed the heart of man within him*. And they are His own choice too: *My son, give me thy heart*. Entreat Him to redress all those abuses wherewith Satan and sin have filled it, and then to take possession of it Himself, for therein consists its happiness. This is, or

should be, a main end of our resortings to His house and service. Wrong not yourselves so far as to turn these serious exercises of religion into an idle divertisement. What a happiness were it, if every time you come to His solemn worship, some of your strongest sins did receive a new wound, and some of your weakest graces a new strength!

James iii. 17.

But the wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

God doth know, that in the day that ye shall eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil, was the first hissing of that old Serpent, by which he poisoned mankind in the root. Man, not contented with the impression of God's image, in which he was created, lost it by catching at a shadow. Climbing higher than his station, he fell far below it: seeking to be more than man, to become as God, he made himself less than man. *He lodged not a night in honour, but became as the beasts that perish.* Psal. xlix. 12. Ever since, nature's best wisdom is full of impurity, turbulency, and distemper; nor can any thing rectify it, but a *wisdom from above*, that both cleanseth and composeth the soul: *it is first pure, and then peaceable.*

This Epistle, as some that follow, is called *General*, both by reason of the dispersion of the parties to whom it is addressed, and the universality of the subject which it treats; containing a great number (if not all) of the necessary directions and comforts of a Christian's life, both for the active and the passive part of it. It is evident that the Apostle's main design is, to arm the dispersed Jews against all kinds of temptations, both those of *affliction*, in the first chapter, at the 2d verse, and *sinful temptations*, verse 13th. And having discoursed of two special means of strengthening them against both, *speaking to God in prayer*, and *hearing God speak in His*

word, in the two last verses of that first chapter, he recommends, as chief duties of religion, and sure evidences of integrity in religion, first, *meekness* and *moderation*, chiefly in their *speeches*, and then, *charity* and *purity* in their *actions;* insisting largely upon the latter, in the second chapter, and upon the former, the ruling of the *tongue*, in this third chapter: and here towards the end of it, he shews the true opposite springs of miscarriage in speech and action, and of right ordering and regulating of both. Evil conversation, strifes and envyings, are the fruits of a base wisdom that is *earthly*, *sensual*, and *devilish*, ver. 15th; but *purity*, *meekness*, and *mercy*, are the proper effects and certain signs of heavenly wisdom.

The wisdom that is from above, is first pure: its gentleness can agree with any thing except *impurity*. Then it is *peaceable:* it offends nobody, except *purity* offend them. It is not raging and boisterous. It is not only *pure*, being void of that mire and dirt which the wicked are said to cast out like the sea, (Isa. lvii. 20,) but *peaceable* likewise, not swelling, and restless like the sea, as is there said of the wicked. Nor is it only *peaceable* negatively, *not offending*, but as the word bears [εἰρηνική] *pacific*, disposed to make and seek peace. And as it readily offends none, so, it is not easily offended. It is *gentle* and *moderate*, [ἐπιεικής,] and if offended, [εὐπειθής] *easily entreated* to forgive. And as it easily passeth by men's offences, so, it doth not pass by, but looks upon their distresses and wants; as full of compassion, as it is free from unruly and distempered passions. Nor rests it in an affecting sympathy; its *mercy* is helpful: *full of mercy and good fruits*. And it both forgives, and pities, and gives, *without partiality and without hypocrisy*. [ἀδιάκριτος καὶ ἀνυπόκριτος.] The word ἀδιάκριτος may as well bear another sense, no less suiting both with this wisdom and these its other qualities; that is, *not taking upon it a censorious discerning and judging of others*. They that have most of this wisdom, are least rigid to those that have less of it. I know no better evidence of strength in

grace, than to bear much with those that are weak in it. And lastly, as it spares the infirmities of others, so it makes not false and vain shews of its own excellencies; it is *without hypocrisy*. This denies two things, both *dissimulation* and *ostentation*. The art of *dissembling* or *hypocrite-craft*, is no part of this wisdom. And for the other, *ostentation*, surely the air of applause is too light a purchase for solid wisdom. The works of this wisdom may be seen, yea, they should be seen, and may possibly be now and then commended; but they should not be done for that low end, either to be seen or to be commended. Surely not, being of so noble extraction. This wisdom having descended from Heaven, will be little careful for the estimation of those that are of the earth, and are but too often of the earth, earthly.

The due order of handling these particulars more fully, cannot well be missed. Doubtless, the *subject*, *wisdom from above*, requires our first consideration; next, the *excellent qualities* that are attributed to it; and lastly, their *order* is to be considered, the rather, because so clearly expressed, *first pure, then peaceable*, &c.

Wisdom from above.] There be two things in that: there is the general term of *wisdom*, common to divers sorts of wisdom, though most eminently and truly belonging to this best wisdom; then there is the *birth* or *original* of this wisdom, serving as its difference, to specify and distinguish it from all the rest, *wisdom from above*. Wisdom in the general, is a very plausible word among men. Who is there that would not willingly pass for wise? Yea, often those that are least of all such, are most desirous to be accounted such; and where this fails them, they usually make up that want in their own conceit and strong opinion. Nor do men only thus love the reputation of wisdom, but they naturally desire to be wise, as they do to be happy: yet, through corrupt nature's blindness, they do as naturally mistake and fall short both of the one and the other; and being once wrong, the more progress they make, they are further out of the way, and pretending to

wisdom in a false way, they still befool themselves, as the Apostle speaks, Rom. i. 22. φάσκοντες εἶναι σοφοὶ ἐμωράνθησαν. *Professing themselves to be wise, they become fools.*

Our Apostle, ver. 15, speaking of that wicked wisdom that is fruitful of wrongs, strifes, and debates, and that is only abusively to be called *wisdom*, shews what kind of wisdom it is, by three notable characters, *earthly*, *natural*, and *devilish*; which, though they be here jointly attributed to one and the same subject, yet we may make use of them to signify some differences of false wisdom. There is an *infernal*, or *devilish wisdom*, proper for contriving cruelties and oppressions, or subtle shifts and deceits that make atheism a main basis and pillar of state policy: such as those *that devise mischief upon their beds*, &c. Mich. ii. 1. This is a *serpentine wisdom*, not joined with, but most opposite to the *dove-like simplicity*. There is an *earthly wisdom* that draws not so deep in impiety as that other, yet is sufficient to keep a man out of all acquaintance with God and Divine matters, and is drawing his eye perpetually downwards, employing him in the pursuit of such things as cannot fill the soul, except it be with anguish and vexation. *By thy great wisdom, and by thy traffic hast thou increased thy riches, and thine heart is lifted up because of thy riches.* Ezek. xxviii. 5. That dexterity of gathering riches, where it is not attended with the Christian art of rightly using them, abases men's souls, and indisposes them wholly for this *wisdom that is from above.* There is a *natural wisdom* far more plausible than the other two, more harmless than that hellish wisdom, and more refined than that earthly wisdom, yet no more able to make man holy and happy than they are: *Natural*, ψυχικὴ, is the word the Apostle St. Paul useth. 1 Cor. ii. ἄνθρωπος ψυχικός, naming the *natural man* by his better part, his soul; intimating that the soul, even in the highest faculty of it, the understanding, and that in the highest pitch of excellency to which nature can raise it, is blind in spiritual objects. Things that are above, cannot be known but by *a wisdom from above.* Nature neither affords this

wisdom, nor can it of itself acquire it. This is to advertise us, that we mistake not *morality and common knowledge*, even of Divine things, for *the wisdom that is from above.* That may raise a man high above the vulgar, as the tops of the highest mountains leave the valleys below them; yet is it still as far short of true supernatural wisdom, as the highest earth is of the highest sphere. There is one main point of the method of this wisdom that is of most hard digestion to a natural man, and the more natural wise he be, the worse he likes it: *If any man would be wise, let him become a fool that he may become wise.* 1 Cor. iii. 18. There is nothing gives nature a greater prejudice against religion, than this initial point of self-denial. When men of eminent learning, or the strong politicians hear, that if they will come to Christ, they must renounce their own wisdom to be fit for his, many of them go away as sorrowful as the young man when he heard of selling all his goods and giving them to the poor.

Jesus Christ is that eternal and substantial Wisdom that came from above, to deliver men from perishing in their affected folly, as you find it at large in Prov. viii. St. Paul, in the first chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians, calls him *the wisdom of God*, ver. 24; that shews his excellency in himself: and ver. 30, he tells us that *He is made of God our wisdom;* that shews his usefulness to us. And by Him alone is this infused wisdom from above conveyed to us. *In Him are the hid treasures of wisdom and knowledge*, Col. ii. 3; and *from His fulness*, if at all, *we all receive grace for grace;* and of all graces, first some measures of this wisdom, without which no man can know himself, much less can he know God.

Now this supernatural wisdom hath in it both speculation and prudence; it is contemplative and practical; these two must not be separated. *I wisdom dwell with prudence.* Prov. viii. 12. This wisdom in its contemplative part, reads Christ much, and discovers in him a new world of hidden excellencies unknown to this old world. There are *treasures of*

wisdom in Him, but they are *hid*, and no eye sees them, but that which is enlightened with thy wisdom. No, it is impossible, as one says (Sophocles), τὰ Θεια γνῶναι κρύπτοντος Θεοῦ, *to know Divine things while God concealeth them.* But when the renewed understanding of a Christian is once initiated into this study, it both grows daily more and more apprehensive, and Christ becomes more communicative of himself, and makes the soul more acquainted with the amiable countenance of his Father in him reconciled. *No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared Him.* John i. 18. What wonder if the unlettered and despised Christian knows more of the mysteries of Heaven, than the naturalist, though both wise and learned? Christ admits the believer into his bosom, and *He* is in the bosom of the Father. But withal know, that all this knowledge, though speculatively high, yet descends to practice: as it learns what God is, so it thence teacheth man, what he should be. This wisdom flows from Heaven, and a heavenly conversation flows from it; as we find it there characterized by those practical graces, of *purity*, *peace*, *meekness*, &c.

This wisdom represents to us, the *purity* of God's nature. 1 John iii. 3. It gives the soul an eye to see the comeliness and beauty of *purity*: as the philosopher said of virtue, to the end it might be loved, he would wish no more but that it could be seen. And as it thus morally persuades, so, by an insensible virtue, it assimilates the soul to Christ, by frequent contemplation. It also produces all the motives to holiness and obedience; it begets these precious qualities in the soul. It giveth a Christian a view of the matchless virtues that are in Christ, and stirs him up to a diligent, though imperfect imitation of them. It sets before us Christ's spotless *purity*, in whose mouth there was no guile, and so invites us to *purity*. It represents the perpetual calmness of His spirit, that no tempest could reach to disturb it: *In his mouth there was no contentious noise, his voice was not heard in the streets;* and this

recommends *peaceableness* and *gentleness*. And so in the rest here mentioned.

Hence, I conceive, may be fitly learned for our use, that seeing here is a due wisdom and knowledge necessary for guidance and direction in the ways of *purity* and *peace*, it is evident that gross ignorance cannot consist with the truth of religion, much less can it be a help and advantage to it. I shall never deny that a false, superstitious religion stands in need of it: 'Not too much scripture-wisdom for the people.' The pomp of that vain religion, like court masks, shews best by candle-light. Fond Nature likes it well: the day of spiritual wisdom would discover its imposture too clearly. But to let their foul devotion pass, (for such it must needs be that is born of so black a mother as ignorance,) let this *wisdom* at least be *justified* of those that pretend to be *her children*. It is lamentable that amongst us, where knowledge is not withheld, men should, through sloth and love of darkness, deprive themselves of it. What abundance of almost brutish ignorance is amongst the commons! and thence arise uncleanness, and all manner of wickedness: a darkness that both hides and increaseth impurity. What is the reason of so much impiety and iniquity in all places, but the want of the knowledge of God? *Not knowing Jesus Christ*, and *not obeying his gospel*, are joined together. Hosea iv. 1, 2; 2 Thes. i. 8. It will be found true, that where there is no obedience, there is no right knowledge of Christ. But out of all question, where there is not a competency of knowledge, there can be no obedience. And as these two lodge together, so observe what attends them both. *He shall come in flaming fire to render vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

And if there be any that think to shroud unpunished amongst the thickets of ignorance, especially amidst the means of knowledge, take notice of this; though it may hide the deformity of sin from your own sight for a time, it cannot pal-

liate it from the piercing eye, nor cover it from the revenging hand of Divine Justice. As you would escape, then, that wrath to come, come to wisdom's school, and how simple soever ye be as to this world, if you would not perish with the world, learn to be *wise unto salvation.*

And truly, it is mainly important for this effect, that the ministers of the Gospel be active and dexterous in imparting this wisdom to their people. If they would have their conversation to be holy, and peaceable, and fruitful, &c., the most expedient way is at once to principle them well in the fundamentals of religion; for therein is their great defect. How can they walk evenly and regularly, so long as they are in the dark? One main thing is, to be often pointing at the way to Christ, the fountain of this wisdom. Without this, you bid them be clothed, and clothe them not.

How needful, then, is it, that pastors themselves be *Seers* indeed, as the prophets were called of old; not only faithful but *wise* dispensers, as our Saviour speaks, Luke xii. 42, that they be διδακτικοί, *able and apt to teach.* 1 Tim. iii. 2. Laudable is the prudence that tries much the churches' storehouses, the seminaries of learning; but withal, it is not to be forgot, that as a due furniture of learning is very requisite for this employment, so is it not sufficient. When one is duly enriched that way, there is yet one thing wanting, that grows not in schools; except this infused *wisdom from above* season and sanctify all other endowments, they remain κοιναί, common and unholy, and therefore unfit for the sanctuary. Amongst other weak pretences to Christ's favour in the last day, this is one, *We have preached in thy name;* yet says Christ, *I never knew you.* Surely, then, they knew not him, and yet they preached him. Cold and lifeless (though never so fine and well contrived) must those discourses be, that are of an *unknown Christ.* Pastors are called angels, and therefore, though they use the secondary helps of knowledge, they are mainly to bring their message from above, from the Fountain, the Head of this pure wisdom.

Pure.] If it come *from above*, it must needs be *pure originally ;* yea, it is *formally pure* too, being a main trait of God's renewed image in the soul. By this wisdom, the understanding is both refined and strengthened to entertain right conceptions of God in his nature and works. And this is primarily necessary, that the mind be not infected with false opinions in religion. If the spring-head be polluted, the streams cannot be pure. This is more important than men usually think, for a good life. But that which I suppose to be here chiefly intended is, that it is *effectively* and *practically pure ; it purifies the heart*, (said of *Faith*, Acts xv. 9, which, in some sense and acceptation, differs not much from this wisdom,) and consequently, the words and actions that flow from the heart.

This *purity*, some render *chastity : The wisdom from above is chaste*, ἁγνή. The word is indeed often so taken, and includes that here, but it is too narrow a sense to restrict it to that only. It implies here, a universal detestation of all impurity, both of flesh and spirit, as the Apostle speaks, 2 Cor. vii. 1. Pride, self-love, profaneness of spirit, and irreligion, though they do not so properly pollute the body as carnal uncleanness, yet they do no less defile the soul, and make it abominable in the sight of God. Those apostate angels, called *unclean spirits*, are incapable of bodily defilement, though indeed they tempt and inveigle men to it ; their own inherent pollutions must needs be spiritual, for they are spirits. *Idolatry*, in Scripture, goes often under the name of *fornication* and *adultery ;* and indeed these sins may mutually borrow and lend their names the one to the other ; idolatry may well be called *spiritual unchastity*, and unchaste love, *carnal idolatry*. Earthly-mindedness likewise is an impurity of the soul : in the Apostle's phrase, *covetousness* is *idolatry*, and so, a spiritual pollution ; yea, it may well share with idolatry in its borrowed name, and be called adultery too, for it misbestows the soul's prime affection upon the creature, which right is God's peculiar due.

This purity that true wisdom works is contrary to all pollu-

tion. We know then in some measure *what* it is: it remains to inquire *where* it is; and there is the difficulty. It is far easier to describe it in itself, than to find it among men. *Who can say, I made my heart clean?* Prov. xx. 9. Look upon the greatest part of mankind, and you may know at first sight, that purity is not to be looked for among them; they suffer it not to come near them, much less to dwell with them and within them; they hate the very semblance of it in others, and themselves delight in intemperance and all manner of licentiousness, like foolish children striving who shall go furthest into the mire. These cannot say, they have *made clean their hearts*, for all their words and actions will belie them. If you come to the mere moralist, the world's *honest man*, and ask him, it may be, he will tell you he hath cleansed his heart; but believe him not. It will appear he is not yet cleansed, because he says he has done it himself; for, you know, there must be some other besides man at this work. Again, he, rising no higher than nature, hath none of this heavenly *wisdom* in him, and therefore is without this *purity* too. But if you chance to take notice of some well-skilled hypocrite, every thing you meet with makes you almost confident that *there* is purity; yet, if he be strictly put to it, he may make some good account of the pains he hath taken to refine his tongue and his public actions, but he dares not say he hath *made clean his heart:* it troubles his peace to be asked the question. He never intended to banish sin, but to retire to his innermost and best room, that so it might dwell unseen within him; and where then should it lodge but in his heart! Yet, possibly, because what is outward is so fair, and man cannot look deeper to contradict him, he may embolden himself to say, he is inwardly suitable to his appearance; but there is a day at hand that shall, to his endless shame, at once discover both his secret impurity, and his impudence in denying it.

After these, there follow a few despised and melancholy persons, (at least as to outward appearance,) who are almost always hanging down their heads, and complaining of abundant

sinfulness. And surely, purity cannot be expected in these who are so far from it by their own confession; yet the truth is, that such purity as is here below, will either be found to lodge among these, or no where. Be not deceived; think not that they who loath, and, as they can, flee from the unholiness of the world, are therefore taken with the conceit of their own holiness; but as their perfect purity of justification is by Christ's imputed righteousness, so likewise they will know, and do always acknowledge, that their inherent holiness is *from above* too, from the same fountain, Jesus Christ. The wisdom *from above* is pure; this is their engagement to humility, for it excludes vaunting and boasting; and besides that, it is imperfect, troubled and stained with sin, which is enough to keep them humble. Their daily sad experience will not suffer them to be so mistaken: their many faults of infirmity cannot but keep them from this presumptuous fault. There is *a generation*, indeed, *that are pure in their own eyes*, but they are such as *are not washed from their filth*. Prov. xxx. 12. They that are washed, are still bewailing that they again contract so much defilement. The most purified Christians are they that are most sensible of their impurity. Therefore I called not this a universal freedom from pollution, but a universal detestation of it. They that are thus pure, are daily defiled with many sins, but they cannot be in love with any sin at all, nor do they willingly dispense with the smallest sin, which a natural man either sees not to be sin, (though his dim moonlight discover grosser evils,) or, if he do see them, yet he judges it too much niceness to choose a great inconvenience rather than a little sin. Again, they differ in another particular: a natural man may be so far in love with virtue after this manner, as to dislike his own faults and resolve to amend them; but yet he would think it a great weakness to sit down and mourn for sin, *and to afflict his soul*, as the Scripture speaks. The Christian's repentance goes not so lightly; there is a great deal more work in it. There is not only *indignation* against impurity, but it proceeds to *revenge*. 2 Cor. vii. 11. The saints we

read of in Scripture, were ashamed of their impurity, but never of their tears for it. Let the world enjoy their own thoughts, and account it folly, yet surely, the Christian who delights in purity, seeing he cannot be free from daily sin, when he retires himself at night, is then best contented when his eyes serve him most plentifully to weep out the stains of the by-past day; yet he knows withal, that it is only his Redeemer's blood that takes away the guilt of them. This is the condition of those that are truly, though not yet fully, cleansed from the pollutions of the world by the Spirit of wisdom and purity. What mean they, then, who would argue themselves out of this number, because they find yet much dross left, and that they are not so defecated and refined as they would wish to be? On the contrary, this hatred of pollution testifies strongly that the contrary of it, *purity*, is there; and though its beginnings be small, doubt not it shall in the end be victorious. The *smoking* of this *flax* shows indeed that there is gross matter there, but it witnesseth likewise that there is fire in it too, and though it be little, we have Christ's own word for it that it shall not be *quenched;* and if He favour it, no other power shall be able to quench it. You find not, indeed, absolute holiness in your persons, nor in your best performances, yet, if you breathe and follow after it, if the pulse of the heart beat thus, if the main current of your affections be towards purity, if sin be in you as your disease and greatest grief, and not as your delight, then take courage; you are as pure as travellers can be; and notwithstanding that impure spirit, Satan, and the impurity of your own spirits, vex you daily with temptations, and often foil you, yet, in despite of them all, you shall arrive safe at home where perfection dwells.

The wisdom from above is pure.] Be ashamed, then, of your extreme folly, you that take pleasure in any kind of uncleanness. Especially, seeing God hath reformed and purged His House amongst us, you that are, or should be, His living temples, remain not unreformed. If you do, Church reformation will be so far from profiting you, that, as a clearer

light, it will but serve to make your impurity both more visible and more inexcusable. If you mean that the Holy Ghost should dwell with you, entertain Him, avoiding both spiritual and fleshy pollutions. The word here used doth more particularly signify *chastity;* and certainly, wherever this *wisdom from above* is, this comely grace is one of her attendants. Whatever any have been in times past, let all be persuaded henceforth to mortify all lustful and carnal affections. Know that there is more true and lasting pleasure in the contempt of unlawful pleasures, than in the enjoyment of them. Grieve not, then, the good Spirit of God with actions or speeches, yea, or with thoughts, that are impure. The unholy soul, like the mystical Babylon, makes itself a cage of unclean birds, and a habitation of filthy spirits; and if it continues to be such, it must, when it dislodges, take up its habitation with cursed spirits for ever in utter darkness. But as for those that are sincerely and affectionately *pure*, that is, *pure in heart*, our Saviour hath pronounced their begun happiness—*Blessed are they that are pure in heart*, and assured them of full happiness—*for they shall see God.* This wisdom is sent from Heaven on purpose to guide the elect thither by the way of purity. And mark how well their reward is suited to their labour: their frequent contemplating and beholding of God's purity as they could, while they were on their journey, and their labouring to be like Him, shall bring them to sit down in glory, and to be for ever the pure beholders of that purest object. *They shall see God.* What this is, we cannot tell you, nor can you conceive it; but walk heavenwards in purity, and long to be there, where you shall know what it means: *for you shall see Him as He is.*

Now to that blessed Trinity be praise for ever!

SERMON II.

PREFACE.

I will return to my place, saith the Lord by His Prophet, *till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face. In their affliction they will seek me early.* Hos. v. 15. The Father of Mercies hides Himself from His children, not to lose them, but that they may seek Him, and may learn, having found him, to keep closer by Him than formerly. He threatens them, to keep them from punishment: if His threatening work submission, it is well; if not, He punishes them gently, to save them from destruction. He seeks no more but that they acknowledge their offence, and seek His face. Wonderful clemency! For who can forbear to confess multitudes of offences, who know themselves? And who can choose but seek Thy face, who ever saw Thy face, and who know Thee? *In their affliction, they will seek me early.* He that prays not till affliction comes and forces him to it, is very slothful; but he that prays not in affliction, is altogether senseless. Certainly, they that at this time are not more than ordinarily fervent in prayer, or do not at least desire and strive to be so, cannot well think that there is any spiritual life within them. Surely, it is high time to stir up ourselves to prayers and tears. All may bear arms in that kind of service. Weak women may be strong in prayer; and those tears wherein they usually abound upon other occasions, cannot be so well spent as this way. Let them not run out in howlings and impatience, but bring them, by bewailing sins, private as well as public, to quench this public fire. And ye men, yea, ye men of courage, account it no disparagement thus to weep. We read often of David's tears, which were no stain to his valour. That cloud which hangs over us, which the frequent vapours of our sins have made, except it dissolve and fall down again in these sweet showers of godly tears, is certainly reserved to be the

matter of a dreadful storm. Be instant, every one, in secret, for the averting of this wrath; and let us now again unite the cries of our hearts for this purpose to our compassionate God, in the name and mediation of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Job xxxiv. 31, 32.

Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more.

That which I see not, teach Thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.

The great sin, as well as the great misery of man, is, the forgetting of God; and the great end and use of His works and of His word, is, to teach us the right remembrance and consideration of Him in all estates. These words do particularly instruct us in the application of our thoughts towards Him in the time of affliction. The shortness and the various signification of the words used in the original, give occasion to some other readings and another sense of them. But this we have in our Translation, being not only very profitable, but very congruous, both to the words of the primitive text, and to the contexture of the discourse, I shall keep to it, without dividing your thoughts by the mentioning of any other. Neither will I lead you so far about, as to speak of the great dispute of this book, and the question about it which is held. He that speaks here, though the youngest of the company, yet, as a wise and calm-spirited man, closes all with a discourse of excellent temper, and full of grave useful instructions, amongst which this is one.

Surely it is meet to be said (or *spoken*) *to God.*] This speaking to God, though it may be vocal, yet it is not necessarily nor chiefly so, but is always mainly, and may often be only, mental: without this, the words of the mouth, how well chosen and well expressed soever they be, are to God of no account or signification at all. But if the heart speak, even when there is not a word in the mouth, it is that He hearkens

to, and regards that speech, though made by a voice that none hears but He, and in a language that none understands but He.

But it is a rare, unfrequent thing, this communing of the heart with God, speaking its thoughts to Him concerning itself, and concerning Him, and His dealings with it, and the purposes and intentions it hath towards Him; which is the speech here recommended, and is that Divine exercise of meditation and soliloquy of the soul with itself and with God, hearkening what the Lord God speaks to us within us, and our hearts echoing and resounding his words (as Psalm xxvii. 8, 9), and opening to Him our thoughts of them and of ourselves. Though they stand open, and He sees them all, even when we tell Him not of them, yet, because He loves us, He loves to hear them of our own speaking: *Let me hear thy voice, for it is sweet;* as a father delights in the little stammering, lisping language of his beloved child. And if the reflex affection of children be in us, we shall love also to speak with *our* Father, and to tell Him all our mind, and to be often with Him in the entertainments of our secret thoughts.

But the most of men are little within: either they wear out their hours in vain discourse with others, or possibly vainer discourses with themselves. Even those who are not of the worst sort, and who, possibly, have their times of secret prayer, yet do not so delight to think of God and to speak with Him as they do to be conversant in other affairs, and companies, and discourses, in which there is a great deal of froth and emptiness. Men think, by talking of many things, to be refreshed; and yet, when they have done, find that it is nothing, and that they had much better have been alone, or have said nothing. Our thoughts and speeches, in most things, run to waste, yea, are defiled; as water spilt on the ground, is both lost, cannot be gathered up again, and is polluted, mingled with dust. But no word spoken to God, from the serious sense of a holy heart, is lost: He receives it, and returns it into our bosom with advantage. A soul that delights to speak to Him, will find that He also delights to speak to it. And this communication

certainly is the sweetest and happiest choice—to speak little with men, and much with God. One short word, such as this here, spoken to God in a darted thought, eases the heart more when it is afflicted, than the largest discourses and complainings to the greatest and powerfullest of men, or the kindest and most friendly. It gives not only ease, but joy, to say to God, *I have sinned, yet I am Thine;* or, as here, *I have borne chastisement, I will no more offend.* The time of affliction is peculiarly a time of speaking to God, and such speech as this is peculiarly befitting such a time. And this is one great recommendation of affliction, that it is a time of wiser and more sober thoughts; a time of the returning of the mind inwards and upwards. A high place, fulness and pleasure, draw the mind more outwards. Great light and white colours dissipate the sight of the eye, and the very thoughts of the mind too; and men find that the night is a fitter season for deep thoughts. *It is better*, says Solomon, *to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting.* Those blacks make the mind more serious. It is a rare thing to find much retirement unto God, much humility and brokenness of spirit, true purity and spirituality of heart, in the affluence and great prosperities of the world. It is no easy thing to carry a very full cup even, and to digest well the fatness of a great estate and great place. They are not to be envied who have them: even though they be of the better sort of men, it is a thousand to one but they shall be losers by the gains and advancements of this world, suffering proportionably great abatements of their best advantages, by their prosperity. The generality of men, while they are at ease, do securely neglect God, and little mind either to speak to Him, or to hear Him speak to them. God complains thus of His own people: *I spoke to them in their prosperity, and they would not hear.* The noises of coach-wheels, of their pleasures, and of their great affairs, so fill their ears, that the *still voice* wherein God is, cannot be heard. *I will bring her into the wilderness, and there I will speak to her heart,* says God of His Church. There the heart is more at quiet to

hear God, and to speak to Him, and is disposed to speak in the style here prescribed, humbly and repentingly.

I have borne chastisement.] The speaking this unto God under affliction, signifies, that our affliction is from His hand; and to the acknowledgement of this truth, the very natural consciences of men do incline them. Though trouble be the general lot of mankind, yet it doth not come on him by an improvidential fatality: though *man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards*, yet it *comes not out of the dust.* Job v. 6, 7. It is no less true, and in itself no less clear, that all the good we enjoy, and all the evil we suffer, come from the same Hand; but we are naturally more sensible of evil than of good, and therefore do more readily reflect upon the original and causes of it. Our distresses lead us to the notice of the righteous God inflicting them, and of our own unrighteous ways procuring them, and provoking Him so to do; and therefore *it is meet* to speak in this submissive, humble language to Him. It is by all means necessary to *speak* to Him. He is the party we have to deal withal, or to speak to, even in those afflictions whereof men are the intervenient visible causes. They are indeed but instrumental causes, the *rod and staff* in His hand who smites us; therefore our business is with *Him* in whose Supreme Hand alone the mitigations and increases, the continuance and the ending of our troubles lie. *Who gave Jacob to the spoil and Israel to the robbers? Did not the Lord, against whom we have sinned?* Isa. xlii. 24. So, Lam. i. 14. *The yoke of my transgressions is bound on by His hand.* Therefore it is altogether necessary in all afflictions to *speak to Him.* And as it is necessary to speak to Him, so *it is meet* to speak *thus* to Him: *I have borne chastisement, I will no more offend.* These words have in them the true composition of real repentance, humble submission, and holy resolution. *I have borne chastisement*, that is, I have justly borne it, and do heartily submit to it; I bear it justly, and take it well; Lord, I acquit thee, and accuse myself. This language becomes the most innocent persons in the world in

their suffering. Job knew it well, and did often acknowledge it in his preceding speeches. Though sometimes, in the heat of dispute, and in opposition to the uncharitable and unjust imputations of his friends, he seems to overstrain the assertion of his own integrity (which Elihu here corrects), you know he cries out, *I have sinned against Thee: what shall I do unto Thee, O Thou preserver of men?* Job vii. 20. And ch. ix. ver. 30. *If I wash myself with snow-water, and make my hands never so clean, yet shalt Thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me.*

Vain, foolish persons fret and foam at the miscarriage of a cause they apprehend to be righteous; but this is a great vanity and inconsiderate temerity in not observing the great and apparent unrighteousness in the persons managing it. But though both the cause and the persons were just to the greatest height imaginable amongst men, yet, still were it meet to speak thus unto God in the lowest acknowledgments and confessions, that *righteousness belongs unto Him, and unto us shame and confusion of face.* So says the Church, Lam. iii. *The Lord is righteous, for I have rebelled against His commandments.* Though affliction is not always designedly intended as the chastisement of some particular sin, yet, where sin is (and that is the case of all the sons of Adam), affliction coming in, may safely be considered in its natural cognation and alliance with sin, and so press forth humble confessions of sin and resolutions against it. And thus, in Lev. xxvi. 41, *They shall accept of the punishment of their iniquity;* shall take it humbly and penitently, and kiss the rod.

Oh, that there were such a heart in us! that, instead of empty words that scatter themselves in the wind, our many vain discourses we hold one with another concerning our past and present sufferings, and further fears, and disputing of many fruitless and endless questions, we were more abundantly turning our speech this way, in unto God, and saying, We desire to give Thee glory, and to take shame to ourselves, and to bear our chastisement, and to offend no more; to return each

from his evil way, and to gain this by the furnace, the purging away of our dross, our many and great iniquities, our oaths, and cursings, and lying, our deceit, and oppressions, and pride, and covetousness, our base love of ourselves, and hating one another; that we may be delivered from the tyranny of our own lusts and passions: and in other things, *let the Lord do with us as seems good in His eyes.* Oh, that we were speaking to God in Ephraim's words, Jer. xxxi. 18, 19, 20: *Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised: turn Thou me, and I shall be turned,* &c.: words not unlike these, would stir His bowels, as there; as it is said, that one string perfectly tuned to another, being touched, the other stirs of itself. When a stubborn child leaves struggling under the rod, and turns to entreating, the father then leaves off striking; nothing overcomes him but that. When a man says unto God, Father, I have provoked Thee to this, but pardon, and through Thy grace I will do so no more, then the rod is thrown aside, and the *Father of mercies* and His humbled child fall to mutual tenderness and embraces.

What I see not, teach Thou me.] The great article of conversion is, the disengagement of the heart from the love of sin. In that posture, as it actually forsakes whatsoever it perceives to be amiss, so it stands in an absolute readiness to return to every duty that yet lies hidden, upon the first discovery. That is here the genuine voice of a repentant sinner, *What I see not, teach Thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.*

This is a very necessary supplication, even for the most discerning and clear-sighted penitent, both in reference to the commandment and rule for discovering the general nature and several kinds of sin, and withal for the application of this general light to the examination of a man's own heart and ways, that so he may have a more exact and particular account of his own sins.

The former part of the petition is for the knowledge of the law of God, as the rule by which a man is to try and to judge

himself. The most knowing are not above the need of this request; yea, I am persuaded, the most knowing know best how much they need it, and are most humbled in themselves in the conscience of their ignorance and darkness in Divine things, and are most earnest and pressing in this daily supplication for increases of light and spiritual knowledge from Him who is the fountain of it: *What I see not, teach Thou me.* On the other side, the least knowing are often the most confident that they know all, and swelled with a conceited sufficiency of their model and determination of all things, both dogmatical and practical; and therefore are they the most imperious and magisterial in their conclusions, and the most impatient of contradiction, or even of the most modest dissent.

The wisest and holiest persons speak always in the humblest and most depressing style of their own knowledge, and that not with an affectation of modesty, but under the real sense of the thing as it is, and the sincere account they give of it, and that commonly when they are declaring themselves most solemnly, as in the sight of God, or speaking in supplication to Him with whom they dare least of all dissemble. Whosoever he was that spake those *words*, in the thirtieth chapter of Proverbs, surely he was a man of eminent wisdom and piety, and yet he begins thus: *Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man; I have neither learned wisdom, nor have I the knowledge of the Holy.* And though he was so diligent a student, and so great a proficient in the law of God, yet how importunate a petitioner is he for the understanding of it, as if he knew nothing at all! Besides the like expressions in other Psalms, in that one Psalm, [cxix.] which, although of such length, hath nothing but the breathing forth of his affection to the word and law of God, how often doth David in it reiterate that petition, *Teach me Thy statutes!*—so often, that a carnal mind is tempted to grow weary of it, as a nauseating tautology; but he made it still new with the freshness and vehemency of his affection: *Make me to understand the way of Thy pre-*

cepts—Give me understanding, and I shall keep Thy law—and *Open Thou mine eyes, that I may see the wonders of Thy law*,—unseal mine eyes, as if they were still veiled and dark. These are the earnest and nobly ambitious desires that daily solicit holy hearts, and stir them up to solicit the Teacher of hearts, to be admitted more into the secrets and recesses of Divine knowledge; not to those abysses that God intends should be secret still, and from which He hath barred out our curiosity, as the forbidden tree of knowledge, those secrets that belong to Himself alone, and concern us not to inquire after. And certainly, to be wading in those deeps, is the way to be drowned in them. *The searcher of majesty shall be oppressed with glory.* Yet, there is in man a perverse, preposterous desire, to pore upon such things as are on purpose hidden that we should not inquire after them, and to seek after useless, empty speculations of them, which is a luxury and intemperance of the understanding, like unto that, and springing from that, which at first undid us in the root. These are times full of those empty, airy questions, and notions in which there is no clearness nor certainty to be attained; and if it were, yet it would serve to little or no purpose, not making the man who thinks he hath found them out, one jot the better or holier man than he was before. *What avails it*, says a devout author, *to dispute and discourse high concerning the Trinity, and want humility, and so displease that Trinity?* The light and knowledge suited according to the intendment of this copy, is of nature such as purifies the heart and rectifies the life. *What I see not, teach Thou me;* that is, of such things as may serve this end, that *if I have done iniquity, I may do it no more.* This is sound and solid knowledge, such a light as inflames the heart with the love of God and of the beauties of holiness, and still, as it grows, makes those to grow likewise. Such are still, we see, David's multiplied supplications in that Psalm [cxix.]; not to know reserved and useless things, but *Hide not Thy commandments from me. Thy hands have made me and fashioned me:* now, what is it

that Thy creature and workmanship begs of Thee? What is that which will complete my being, and make me do honour to my Maker? This is it,—*Give me understanding that I may learn Thy commandments.*

You that would be successful supplicants in this request, wean your hearts from that vanity of desire: such knowledge is as the cypress-tree, fair and tall, but fruitless and sapless. Apply all you know to the purging out of sin, and intend all the further knowledge you desire to that same end. Seek to be acquainted with higher rules of mortification, and self-denial, and charity, than as yet you have either practised, or possibly so much as thought on; that by these, your affections and actions may be advanced to greater degrees of purity, and conformity with the holiness of God. And for this end, beg of Him to teach you what you see not in the exactness of the law and rule; and withal (which is the other thing in this word), that, what you see not in the application of it and search of yourself, He would likewise shew you; for in that we are commonly as undiscerning and dim-sighted as in the other. Even where men have some notion of the rule and their duty, yet they perceive not their own, even their gross recessions and declinings from it. Love is a blinding thing, and above all love, self-love; and every man is naturally his own flatterer: he deals not faithfully and sincerely with himself in the search of his own evils. Now this we are to entreat of God, to be led into ourselves, and to be applied to the work of self-searching, by His own hand; not only to have a right apprehension of the law given us, but a true sight of ourselves. Oh! how many hidden, undiscerned, yea, unsuspected impurities and follies are there in the hearts of those who are the most diligent in this inquiry, much more in the greater part even of such as cannot absolutely be denied the name of good men! Some honest intentions and good desires there are in them; but they are slothful and unwilling to go into this painful business of trying and judging themselves; and when they set to it, many secret corners, and, in those, many latent

corruptions do escape their search. *Cleanse me from secret faults*, says David ; that is, not only those hidden from men, but even from myself, as is clearly his meaning, by the words preceding, *Who knows the errors of his life?* Therefore is it necessary that we should desire light of God. *The spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord*, says Solomon, *searching the innermost parts of the belly ;* but it is a candle unlighted, when He does not illuminate it for that search. Oh ! what a deal of vanity and love of this world, envy and secret pride, lurks in many of our hearts, which we do not at all perceive, till God causeth us to see it, leading us in, as He did the prophet Ezekiel in the vision, to see the idolatry of the Jews in His very temple, by which they had provoked Him to forsake it, and go far from his sanctuary ; and having discovered one parcel, leads him in further, and makes him enter through the wall, and adds often, *Son of man, hast thou seen these? I will cause thee to see yet more abominations, and yet more abominations.* Thus it is within many of us who should be His temples, but we have a multitude of images of jealousy, one lying hid behind another, till He thus discovers them to us. Oh, what need have we to entreat Him thus, *What I see not, teach Thou me !*

Now, in both these, both in the knowledge of our rule and of ourselves, though there may be some useful subserviency of the ministry of men, yet the great Teacher of the true knowledge of His law, and of Himself, and of ourselves, is God. Men may speak to the ear, but His chair is in Heaven who teaches hearts: *cathedram habet in cœlo.* Matchless Teacher! who teacheth more in one hour than men can do in a whole age—who can cure the invincible unteachableness of the dullest heart, *give understanding to the simple, and open the eyes of the blind !* So then, would we be made wise, wise for eternity, learned in real, living divinity, let us sit down at His feet and make this our continual request, *What I see not, teach Thou me!*

If I have done iniquity.] That is, any iniquity that I yet know not of, any hidden sin, let me but once see it, and, I

hope, Thou shalt see it no more within me; not willingly lodged and entertained. This speaks an entire, total giving up of all sin, and is a proclaiming of utter defiance and enmity against it; casting out what is already found out, without delay, and resolving that still in further search, as it shall be more discovered, it shall be forthwith dislodged, without a thought of sparing or partial indulgence to anything that is sin, or that is like it, or that may any way befriend it, or be an occasion and incentive of it. This is that absolute renouncing of sin, and surrender of the whole soul and our whole selves to God, which whosoever do not heartily consent to and resolve on, their religion is in vain, and (which is here the point) their affliction is in vain: whatsoever they have suffered, they have gained nothing by all their sufferings, if their hearts remain still self-willed, stubborn, untamed, and unpliable to God. And this makes their miseries out of measure miserable, and their sins out of measure sinful; whereas, were it thus qualified, and had it any operation this way towards the subjecting of their hearts unto God, affliction were not to be called misery, but would go under the title of a blessedness: *Blessed is the man whom Thou correctest and teachest him out of Thy law.* That is suiting with this here desired, *I have borne chastisement: what I see not, teach Thou me; and if I have done iniquity, I will do it no more.* Oh! were it thus with us, my brethren, how might we rejoice, and insert into our praises all that is come upon us, if it had wrought or advanced anything of this kind within us, this blessed compliance with the will of God; not entertaining anything knowingly that displeases Him; finding a pleasure in the denial and destruction of our own most beloved pleasures at His appointment and for His sake. Whatsoever is in us, and dearest to us, that would offend us, that would draw us to offend Him, *were it the right hand, let it be cut off; or the right eye, let it be plucked out:* or, to make shorter work, let the whole man die at once, crucified with Jesus, *that we may be henceforth dead to sin, dead to the world, dead to ourselves, and alive only to God.*

SERMON III.

PREFACE.

THERE is no exercise so delightful to those that are truly godly, as the solemn worship of God, if they find His powerful and sensible presence in it; and indeed there is nothing on earth more like to Heaven than that is. But when He withdraws Himself, and withholds the influence and breathings of His Spirit in His service, then good souls find nothing more lifeless and uncomfortable. But there is this difference, even at such a time, betwixt them and those that have no spiritual life in them at all—that they find, and are sensible of this difference; whereas the others know not what it means. And for the most part, the greatest number of those that meet together with a profession to worship God, yet are such as do not understand this difference. Custom and formality draw many to the ordinary places of public worship, and fill too much of the room; and sometimes novelty and curiosity, drawing to places not ordinary, have a large share: but how few are there that come on purpose to meet with God in His worship, and to find His power in strengthening their weak faith, and weakening their strong corruptions, affording them provision of spiritual strength and comfort against times of trial, and, in a word, advancing them some steps forward in their journey towards Heaven, where happiness and perfection dwell! Certainly, these sweet effects are to be found in these ordinances, if we would look after them. Let it grieve us, then, that we have so often lost our labour in the worship of God through our own neglect, and entreat the Lord, that at this time He would not send us away empty. For how weak soever the means be, if He put forth His strength, the work shall be done, in some measure, to His glory and our edification. Now that He may be pleased to do so, to leave a blessing behind Him, let us pray, &c.

Isaiah xxviii. 5, 6.

In that day shall the Lord of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty unto the residue of his people;

And for a spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment, and for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate.

All the works of Divine providence are full of wisdom and justice, even every one severally considered; yet we observe them best to be such, when we take notice of their order and mutual aspect one to another, whether in the succession of times, or such passages as are contemporary and fall in together at one and the same time. As, when the Lord brings notable judgments upon the proud workers of iniquity, and at the same time confers special mercies on His own people, who is there that may not perceive justice and mercy illustrating and beautifying one another? It is true, the full reward and perfect rest of the godly is not here below; they would be sorry if it were: nor is this the place of plenary punishment for the ungodly; men may look for a judgment too. Yet the Lord is pleased at some times to give some resemblances and pledges, as it were, of that great and last judgment in remarkable passages of justice and mercy, at one and the same time; and such a time it is that the Prophet foretels in this his sermon, which concerns the two sister kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Having denounced a heavy calamity to come upon Israel, under the name of Ephraim, he comforts those of Judah under the name of *the residue of His people.* They not being so grossly corrupted as the others were, he stays them with this promise: *In that day*, saith he, when the other shall be overwhelmed, as with a deluge, *the Lord of Hosts shall be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty unto the residue of His people.*

The promise is made up of three benefits, yet the three are but one; or rather, one is all the three to them: *The Lord of Hosts,* it is He that shall be their *honour*, *wisdom*, and *strength;*

He shall be a crown, &c. But first, a word as to the circumstance of time, *In that day.*

That sovereign Lord who at first set up the lights of heaven to distinguish times and seasons by their constant motion, and likewise, by His supreme providence ruling the world, hath fixed the periods of states and kingdoms, and decreed their revolutions, their rising, ascending, and their height, with their decline and setting—hath, by a special providence, determined those changes and vicissitudes that befal His Church. That which the Psalmist speaks, in his own particular, Psal. xxxi. 15, holds of each believer, and of the Church which they make up in all ages and places: *I said, Thou art my God, my times are in Thy hand.* A sure and steady hand indeed, and therefore he builds his confidence upon it, ver. 13. *They took counsel against me, but I trusted in thee.* And upon this, he prays in faith, that the face of God may shine upon him, and the wicked may be ashamed.

Thus, then, as many of you as are looking after a day of mercy to the Church of God, pray and believe upon this ground, That the time of it is neither in the frail hands of those that favour and seek it, nor in the hands of those that oppose it, how strong and subtle soever they be, but in His almighty hand who doth in heaven and earth what pleaseth Him. If He have said, *Now*, and *here*, will I give a day of refreshment to my people who have long groaned for it, a day of the purity and power of religion; if, I say, this be *His* purpose, they must have somewhat more than omnipotence who can hinder it. When his appointed time comes, to make a day of deliverance dawn upon His Church, after their long night either of affliction or of defection, or both, they who contrive against that day-spring are as vain as if they would sit down to plot how to hinder the sun from rising in the morning: and they who let go their hopes of it, because of great apparent difficulties that interpose betwixt their eye and the accomplishment of that work, are as weak as if they should imagine, when mists and thick vapours appear about the horizon in the

morning, that these could hinder the rising of the sun, which is so far out of their reach, and *comes forth as a bridegroom, and rejoices as a mighty man to run his race*, says David. Those mists may indeed hinder his clear appearance, and keep it from the eye for a time; but reason tells us, even then, that they cannot stop his course. And faith assures us no less, in the other case, that no difficulties can hold back God's day and work of mercy to His people. But you will say, All the difficulty is, to know whether the appointed time be near or not. It is true we have no particular prophecies to assure us; but certainly, when God *awakes* His children, and makes them *rise*, this is a probable sign that it is near day. I mean, when He stirs them up to more than usual hopes, and prayers, and endeavours, it is very likely that he intends them some special good. But yet more, when He Himself is *arisen* (as it pleaseth Him to speak), that is, when He is begun to appear, in a more than ordinary manner of working, by singular and wonderful footsteps of providence, this is, no doubt, a sign that He will go on to shew remarkable mercy to *Sion*, and that *the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come.* Psal. cii. 13.

Howsoever, then, let the wonderful workings of the Lord move those of you that have any power and opportunity, to be now (if ever) active for the greatest good both of the present age and of posterity. And you that can be no other way useful, yet you shall be no small helpers, if you be much in prayer; let both your hopes and your fears serve to sharpen your prayers. Be not too much dejected with any discouragement, neither be ye carnally lifted up with outward appearances; for *the heart of him that is lifted up, is not upright in him*, Hab. ii. 4; but *live*, as *the just* do, *by* your *faith*. And if the deferring of your hopes should *sicken your hearts*, as Solomon speaks, yet stay and comfort them with the cordial of the promises. This you are sure of, you have God's own word engaged for it, that in those latter days Babylon shall be brought to the dust, and the true Church of Christ shall flourish

and increase. And this *vision is for an appointed time* (as Habakkuk says of his) ; *at the end it shall speak, and not lie : though it tarry, wait for it, it will surely come, it will not tarry.*

In that day.] That is, in the day of Ephraim's or Israel's calamity, denounced in the former verses ; which, as most do conceive, was when the Assyrian oppressed them, and in the end led them captive, in the reign of Hosea, as you have the history of it, 2 Kings xvii., at which time Hezekiah was king of Judah, as you find in the following chapter : and in *that notable reformation* wrought by him, with those blessings that followed upon it, is found the accomplishment of this promise to Judah, *In that day*, &c. The parallel of God's different dealing with these two kingdoms at the time there specified (*in that day*) does afford divers lessons, which might be here not impertinently taken notice of. Only this :—

Though Judah also had its own corruptions when Hezekiah came to the crown, yet it pleased the Lord to spare them and work a peaceable reformation, making Israel's punishment their warning. Truly, that nation with whom the Lord deals thus graciously, is vilely ungrateful if they observe it not with much humility and thankfulness, and with profit too. If the Lord should answer your desires and hopes with a reformation in a peaceable way, and should yet lengthen out your long-continued peace, and should make this little past shaking of it cause it to take root the faster ; if He should, I say, do this, where would ye find fit praises for such a wonder of mercy ?— especially considering, that in the meanwhile He hath made other reformed churches fields of blood, and made, as it were, the sound of their stripes preach repentance to us. But certainly, if the hearing the voice of the rod prevail not, we shall feel the smart of it, as this people of Judah did afterwards, because they were not so wise as to become wiser and better by Israel's folly and calamity. We are expecting great things at our Lord's hands, and our provocations and sins gainst Him are great ; yet there is no one of them all puts us in so much

danger of disappointment, as impenitence. Were there more repentance and personal reformation amongst us, we might take it as a hopeful forerunner of that public reformation which so many seem now to desire.

The Lord of Hosts.] This style of His, you know, is frequent in the Prophets, in their predictions of mercy and judgment; intimating both His greatness and majesty, and His supreme power for accomplishing His word. No created power can resist Him; yea, all must serve Him. The most excellent creatures can have no greater honour; the greatest are not exempted, nor the meanest excluded, from serving Him. In Acts xii. 23, you find one of the noblest creatures, and a number of the vilest, made use of at the same time in the same service. Because Herod did accept of the sacrilege of the people, and gave not back to this Lord of hosts His own glory, *the angel of the Lord smote him,* and *the vermin devoured him.* And in Egypt, you know the employing of the destroying angel, and what variety of hosts this Lord of hosts did employ to plague them. What madness, then, is it to oppose and encounter this great General!—even in doubtful cases, to run on blindly, without examining, lest peradventure a man should be found a fighter against God. And on the other side, it is great weakness to admit any fear under His banner. If a man could say, when he was told of the multitude of the ships the enemy had, *Against how many do ye reckon me?* how much more justly may we reckon this Lord of hosts, against multitudes of enemies, how great soever! *They are to Him as the drop of a bucket, and the smallest dust of the balance.* It is ignorance and mean thoughts of this mighty Lord, that makes His enemies so confident: and it is the same evil, in some degree, or, at the best, forgetfulness of His power, that causeth diffidence in His followers. *I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and forgettest the Lord thy Maker?* Isa. li. 12, 13. Now this same Lord of hosts, you know, is likewise called *the God of peace:* He is indeed *et pace et*

bello insignis, splendid both in peace and war. The blessing of peace and the success of war are both from Him; and to Him alone is due the praise of both.

Shall be for a crown of glory.] He shall dignify and adorn them by His special presence; to wit, in the purity of His ordinances and religion amongst them: the profession and flourishing of that shall be their special glory and beauty. For, as the other two benefits concern their civil good, *justice* flourishing within, and wealth and opulency from without, so, doubtless, this first, this *glory* and *beauty*, is religion, as the chiefest of the three, and the other two are its attendants. In Psalm xxvi. 8, the sanctuary, the place of their solemn worship, is called *the place where God's honour dwelleth*, or the tabernacle of His honour; and Psalm xcvi. 9, *the glorious sanctuary*, or *the beauty of holiness*. And the ark of God, you know, was called *the glory*. *The glory is departed from Israel* (said the wife of Phineas), *for the ark of God is taken.* 1 Sam. iv. 21. Pure religion and a pure worship is the glory of God amongst His people, and consequently *their* glory. Now, referring this prophecy to Hezekiah's time, the accomplishment of it is evident, in that work of reformation whereof you have the full history, 2 Chron. xxix. 30, &c.

If it be thus, that the purity of religion and worship is *the crown and glory* of a people; and therefore, on the other side, that their deepest stain of dishonour and vileness is the vitiating of religion with human devices; then, to contend for the preservation or the reformation of it, is noble and worthy of a Christian. It is for the crown of Jesus Christ, which is likewise a *crown of glory*, and a *diadem of beauty* to *them*, He being their head. It is, indeed, the true glory both of kings and their kingdoms. Labour, then, for constancy in this work: let no man take your crown from you. You know how busy the emissaries of the Church of Rome have been to take it from us, or, at least, to pick the diamonds out of it, and put in false, counterfeit ones in their places. I mean, they stole away the power of religion, and filled up the room with

shadows and fopperies of their own devising. It is the vanity of that Church, to think they adorn the worship of God when they dress it up with splendour in her service, which, though some magnify it so much, yet may most truly be called a glistering slavery and captivity. Then is she truly free and wears her *crown*, when the ordinances of God are conformable to His own appointment. It is vanity in man, I say, when they dress it up with a multitude of gaudy ceremonies, and make *it* the smallest part of *itself;* whereas, indeed, its true glory consists not in pomp, but in purity and simplicity. In the twelfth chapter of the Apocalypse, we find the Church, under the name of a woman, richly attired indeed, but her ornaments be all heavenly; *the sun* her clothing, and her crown, *of twelve stars*. Needs she then borrow sublunary glory? No, she treads upon it: *the moon* is *under her feet.* There is another woman, indeed, in that same book, *arrayed in purple and scarlet, decked with gold and precious stones*, and *having a golden cup in her hand*, but that golden cup is *full of abominations and filthiness*, and she herself the *mother of abominations*. Apoc. xvii. 4. The natural man judges according to his reach; but to a spiritual eye there is a most genuine beauty in the service of God and the government of His house; and when they are nearest to the rule, the word of God, then is it, that the Lord himself is *the crown and diadem* of His Church.

A crown of glory.] Again; we may consider this personally, as belonging in particular to every believer. They are all *made kings and priests unto God the Father*. Apoc. i. 6. They are *a chosen generation, a royal priesthood*, 1 Pet. ii. 9, how despicable soever to the world. This is their dignity: *The Lord is their crown and diadem.* He subdues their lusts, and makes them kings over their own affections, and more than conquerors over all troubles and persecutions. Whereas carnal men are continually hurried, like slaves, unto base employments, still kept toiling in the ignoble service of their own lusts. They think, indeed, it is their liberty, but

that is a baseness of spirit, that complies so well with so vile and servile a condition. And whereas they judge the godly to be the refuse and dross of the earth, and the proper objects of contempt, this is because this their crown, though most glorious, is invisible to the eye of Nature. *The Lord is a crown.* If they knew what this is, they would see enough in it to countervail their outward meanness and the reproaches the world cast on them: as the apostle St. Peter hath it, 1 Pet. iv. 14, *If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye, for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth on you.* He is their *crown.*

And observe how this crown is opposed to that blasted glory and fading *crown of pride,* spoken of in the former verses. *Wo to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower.*

Who is there that sees not, in daily experience, the vanity and inconstancy of worldly glory, and yet how few are there that wean themselves from it, and learn to disdain it! Still men dote upon that which is not—upon a shadow, a nothing. But would you have a glory that fadeth not, a garland that cannot wither, make the Lord your *crown* and your *glory;* and if He be so, glory in Him, and in nothing else. *Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth* ME. Jer. ix. 23, 24.

You that are noble, aspire to this *crown,* as being so far above your perishing honours and bounded powers; and you that are outwardly meaner and lower, see how little cause you have to complain of your condition, seeing you are not debarred from this best and greatest honour: and, that you may discern it aright what it is, know that it consists in the renovation of God's image within you, which is in holiness and righteousness: so the Lord becomes your *crown* in the kingdom of grace. And by this you may discover, whether or no you have attained it: if you can yet delight to wallow in the

puddle and pleasures of sin, you are far from this royal condition; but if you find your soul possessed with the love of holiness, and that you are trampling upon profane delights, this may persuade you that God hath enabled you, and crowned you with His grace, and will crown you with glory. Again, try it by this; if the Lord is become your crown and your glory, you will glory in him, and in nothing else. Though you be wise, you will not glory in your wisdom, nor in strength, nor in riches, nor in honours, though you had them all; but if you glory, you will glory in the Lord. And withal, your highest joy will be, to see the advancement of His glory, and, if you can, to be any way serviceable to the advancing of it.

And for a spirit of judgment.] Both to those that *sit in judgment*, and to the people. For justice is the strongest base and establishment of authority. And withal, the influence of it is most sweet and comfortable to those who are under authority; and where it is wanting, that order and relation of superiors and inferiors, which God hath appointed in the societies of men for their good, tends exceedingly to the damage of both. And therefore, where God intendeth to continue the peace and welfare of a people, He is liberal in pouring out much of this *spirit of judgment* on those who *sit in judgment.* On the contrary, it is for a heavy punishment when He withdraws His Spirit from rulers, and leaves them wholly to the corruption and vanity of their own spirits.

To him that sitteth in judgment.] That is, to all that are in places of authority and judicature, from the supreme to the lowest magistrate; for this concerns them all. For they be all raised; in their subordination, and several places above the people, for the benefit and good of the people; as the stars, that be set so high, yet are placed there to be useful and beneficial to the inferior world.

Now this spirit of judgment comprehends in it both due *wisdom* and *prudence*, for the trial and right judging of affairs, and for the discerning betwixt sound and perverse counsel; and withal, a *judgment practically good*, that cannot be

biassed from the straight line of equity and justice by any sinister respect.

Now, seeing the *spirit of judgment* is from the Lord, yea, He is this spirit, it ought to persuade those that *sit in judgment* to entreat and pray for this, and to depend upon it, and beware of self-confidence. *Trust in the Lord,* saith Solomon, *and lean not to thine own understanding:* if you do, it will prove but a broken reed. And as they that sit in judgment should entreat His spirit by prayer, so, generally, all must share with them in this duty, and make supplication for all that are in authority over them, especially in extraordinary times. Truly we have matter of thankfulness, that the Lord hath in some measure inclined the royal heart of our sovereign to the desires of his people; and we ought still to pray, that the Lord would *give the king His judgments;* and then, as the Psalmist adds, *The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness.* Psal. lxxii. 3. And, for this end, let all who wish the public, yea, their own good, pray much for abundance of this *spirit of judgment* to be conferred on them. Your eyes and expectations are upon them. If you would enjoy the lamp, you must pour in oil. This spirit, indeed, you cannot pour upon them, but if you pour out many prayers, you may draw it from above: He will give it, who here promises to be *a spirit of judgment.*

And for strength.] Observe, the way to be powerful and successful against foreign enemies, is, to have religion and justice flourishing at home. And truly, if it please our God to answer the desires of His people at this time, it may so unite the affection and strength of the two kingdoms (*the Lord of hosts* being their *strength*) as to make them a terror to their enemies; whereas they were become a scorn and derision to them. For your particular, labour to make the Lord your glory, to have Christ made unto you, as the Apostle speaks, *both wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification,* which are the glory and beauty of the soul, *and redemption* from spiritual enemies. Draw strength from Him, to fight and prevail against

them, till, after the short combat of this life, you obtain the crown, and dwell in His presence, where you shall fear no more assaults, neither of sin nor of affliction, but shall be for ever happy in the blessed vision of His face. *To him be glory.* Amen.

SERMON IV.

PREFACE.

ETERNAL worship doth openly acknowledge a Deity, but want of inward sense in worship secretly denieth it: *The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God.* It is strange to hear so much noise of religion in the world, and to find so little piety. To present the living God with a carcass of lifeless worship, is to pay him with shells of services, and so to mock Him. And it is a more admirable long-suffering in Him to defer the punishment of such devotion, than of all the other sins in the world. The Egyptian temples were rich and stately fabrics: a stranger who had looked upon them without, would have imagined some great deity within; but if they entered (as Lucien says, laughing at them), nothing was to be seen, but only some ape, or cat, or pied bull, or some other fine god like those. To behold our fair semblance of religion who frequent this house, it would appear that we were all the temples of the Holy Ghost; but whoso could look within us, would find in many of our hearts lust, pride, avarice, or some such like secret vice adored as a god. And these are they which, while our bodies sit here, do alienate our souls from the service of the Eternal God, so that we are either altogether senseless and dead before Him, or, if any fit of spiritual motion rise within us, we find it here, and here we leave it, as if it were sacrilege to take it home with us. But did once that

Spirit of Grace breathe savingly upon our souls, we should straight renounce and abhor those base idols, and then all the current of our affection would run more in this channel: our services would then be spiritual, and it would be our Heaven upon earth to view God in His sanctuary. And the obtaining of the change is, or should be, one main end of this our meeting; and, that it may be the happy effect of it, our recourse must be to the throne of grace by humble prayer, in the name of our Mediator, *Jesus Christ, the righteous.*

Isaiah lx. 1.

Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.

Admirable is the worth and depth of Divine providence! This, either we know not, or at least seldom remember. While we forget the wonders of Providence, we direct our thoughts to baser objects, and think not on it; and while we forget the depth of Providence (if at any time we look towards it), we judge rashly and think amiss of it. If this be true of that general providence whereby God rules the world, it is more true of His special providence towards his Church. This is both the most excellent piece of it, and therefore best worth the reading; and also the hardest piece, and therefore it requires sobriety in judging: above all other things, he that suddenly judges in this, makes haste to err. To have a right view of it, it must be taken altogether, and not by parcels. Pieces of rarest artifice, while they are making, seem little worth, especially to an unskilful eye, which, being completed, command admiration. Peter Martyr says well, *De operibus Dei, antequam actum, non est judicandum: There is no judging of the works of God, before they are finished.* There is a time when the daughters of Sion *embrace the dunghill,* and *sit desolate in the streets,* as Jeremiah hath it in his Lamentations (iv. 5); and at that same time the voice of Babylon is, *I sit as a queen, and shall see no sorrow.* Apoc.

xviii. 7, Isa. xlvii. 7. All is out of order here. But if we stay awhile, we shall see Sion and Babylon appointed to change seats, by the great Master of the world: *Come down*, says He, *Daughter of Babylon, and sit in the dust.* Isa. xlvii. 1. And here, to Sion, *Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.* It is an entire catastrophe: both parties find a notable alteration together. That same Hand that exalts the one, ruins the other. When the sun rises upon the Church, her antipodes must needs be covered with darkness; as we find it in the next verse to the text: *Darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee.*

The Prophet, elevated by the Spirit of God to a view of after ages as clear as if they were present, seems here to find His people sitting under the dark mantle of a sad and tedious night; and, having long expected the sun's return in vain, before its time, they give over expectation when it is near them, and desperately fold themselves to lie perpetually in the dark. Now the Prophet, standing, as it were, awake upon some mountain, perceives the day approaching, and the golden chariots of the morning of deliverance hasting forward, and seems to come speedily with these glad news to a captive people, and sounds this trumpet in their ears, *Arise, shine, for thy light is come.* The very manner of expression is sudden and rousing, without a copulative; not *Arise and shine*, but, *Arise, shine*, &c.

The words have in them a clear stamp of relation to a low posture and obscure condition: they suppose a people lying or sitting without light. Deep distress is that dark foil that best sets off the lustre of marvellous deliverances; and among many other reasons of the Church's vicissitudes, why may not this be one? The Lord is more illustrious in the world by that deep wisdom and great power that shines when He raises and restores her from desperate afflictions, than if He had still preserved her in constant ease. He seems sometimes careless of

her condition, and regardless of her groans; but even then is He *waiting the most fit time to be gracious*, as our prophet speaks. And when it is time, out of the basest estate He brings her forth more fresh, strong, and beautiful than before. *Though you have lien among the pots, yet ye shall be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.* Psal. lxviii. 13. Do with the Church what you will, she shall come through, and that with advantage. *Mergas profundo, pulchrior exilit,* as one says of Rome. Keep the Church seventy years captive, yet, after that, she shall arise and shine more glorious than ever.

But surely, the strain of this evangelic prophecy rises higher than any temporal deliverance. Therefore we must rise to some more spiritual sense of it, not excluding the former. And that which some call divers senses of the same scripture, is, indeed, but divers parts of one full sense. This prophecy is, out of question, a most rich description of the kingdom of Christ under the Gospel. And in this sense, this invitation to *arise* and *shine* is mainly addressed to the mystical Jerusalem, yet not without some privilege to the literal Jerusalem beyond other people. They are first invited to *arise* and *shine*, because this sun arose first in their horizon. Christ came *of* the Jews, and came first *to* them. *The Redeemer shall come to Zion*, says our Prophet, in the former chapter. But miserable Jerusalem *knew not the day of her visitation, nor the things that concerned her peace, and therefore are they now hid from her eyes.* She delighted to deceive herself with fancies of I know not what imaginary grandeur and outward glory, to which the promised Messiah should exalt her, and did, in that kind particularly, abuse this very prophecy; so doting upon a sense grossly literal, she forfeited the enjoyment of those spiritual blessings that are here described. But, undoubtedly, that people of the Jews shall once more be commanded to *arise and shine*, and their return shall be the riches of the Gentiles; and that shall be a more glorious time than ever the Church of God did yet behold. Nor is there any inconvenience, if we

think that the high expressions of this prophecy have some spiritual reference to that time, since the great doctor of the Gentiles applies some words of the former chapter to that purpose, Rom. xi. 29. They forget a main point of the Church's glory who pray not daily for the conversion of the Jews.

But to pass that, and insist on the spiritual sense of these words, as directed to the whole Church of Christ, they contain a powerful incitement to a twofold act, enforced (as I conceive) by one reason under a twofold expression, neither of them superfluous, but each giving light to the other, and suiting very aptly with the two words of command: *Arise, for the glory of the Lord is risen, and Shine, for thy light is come.*

I will not now subdivide these parts again, and cut them smaller, but will rather unite them again into this one proposition: *The coming and presence of Christ engages all to whom he comes, to arise and shine.* In this proposition may be considered, the nature of the duties, the universality of the subject, and the force of the reason.

I. The nature of the duties, what it is to *arise and shine.* Arising hath reference either to a fall, or to some contrary posture of sitting or lying, or to one of those two conditions which are so like one another, sleep, or death; and to all these, spiritually understood, may it here be referred. This is the voice of the Gospel to the sons of Adam, *Arise;* for in him they all *fell.* The first sin of that first man was the great fall of mankind: it could not but undo us, it was from so high a station. Our daily sins are our daily falls, and they are the fruits of that great one. *Thou hast fallen by thine iniquity,* says the Lord to His people, Hos. xiv. 1. As for those postures of sitting and lying, the Scripture makes use of them both to signify the state of sin. Says not St. John, *The world lies in wickedness?* 1 John v. 19. Are not the people said to *sit in darkness,* mentioned Matt. iv. 16? Which is directly opposite to *arise and shine.* In the darkness of Egypt, it is said, the people *sat still;* none arose from their places. In

the gross mist of corrupt nature, man cannot bestir himself to any spiritual action; but when this light is come, then he may, and should arise.

Now for sleep and death, sin is most frequently represented in holy writ under their black vizors. To forbear citing places where they are severally so used, we shall find them jointly in one, Ephes. v. 14. *Arise, thou that sleepest, and stand up from the dead;* which place seems to have special allusion to this very text.

The impenitent sinner is as one buried in sleep: his soul is in darkness, fit for sleep, and loves to be so. That he may sleep the sounder, he shuts all the passages of light, as enemies to his rest, and so, by close windows and curtains, makes an artificial night to himself within: not a beam appears there, though without, the clear day of the Gospel shines round about him. The senses of his soul, as we may call them, are all bound up, and are not *exercised to discern good and evil*, as the Apostle speaks, Heb. v. 14. And his leading faculty, his understanding, is surcharged with sleepy vapours, that arise incessantly from the inferior part of his soul, his perverse affections. Nor hath his mind any other exercise, in this sleepy condition, than the vain business of dreaming. His most refined and wisest thoughts are but mere extravagancies from man's due end, and his greatest contentments nothing but golden dreams. Yet he is serious in them, and no wonder; for who can discern the folly of his own dream till he is awake? He that dreams he eateth, when he awakes, finds *his soul empty*, and not till then. Isa. xxix. 8. Now, while he thus sleeps, his great business lies by; yet spends he his hand-breadth of time as fast, while he is fast asleep, as if he were in continual employment. Judge, then, if it be not needful to bid this man *arise*.

Lastly, this voice may import, that man is spiritually dead. *God* is the life of the soul, as *it* is of the body: while He dwells there, it is both comely and active, but once destitute of His presence, it becomes a carcass, where, besides privation of

life and motion, there is a positive filthiness, a putrefaction in the soul, unspeakably worse than that of dead bodies. *Corruptio optimi pessima.* And as dead bodies are removed from the sight of men, dead souls are cast out from the favourable sight of God till Christ's saying *Arise* revives them. The ministers of the word are appointed to cry *Arise*, indifferently to all that hear them; and Christ hath reserved this privilege and liberty, to join his effective voice, when and to whom he pleases. A carnal man may shew his teeth at this; but who is he that can, by any solid reason, charge absurdity upon this way of dispensing outward and inward vocation? I will not here mention their idle cavils. The Scripture is undeniably clear in this, that man is naturally *dead in sin.* The Gospel bids him *arise*, and it is Christ that is his life, and that raises him.

Thus we see, in some measure, what it is for men to *arise.* Now being risen, they must *shine*, and that two ways; *jointly and publicly*, as they make up visible churches, and likewise *personally*, in their particular conversation. First, then, what is the shining of the true church? Doth not a church then shine, when church service is raised from a decent and primitive simplicity, and decorated with pompous ceremonies, with rich furniture and gaudy vestments? Is not the church then beautiful? Yes, indeed; but all the question is, whether this be the proper, genuine beauty, or not; whether this be not *strange fire*, as the fire that Aaron's sons used, which became vain, and was taken as strange fire. Methinks it cannot be better decided, than to refer it to St. John, in his book of the Revelations. We find there the descriptions of two several women: the *one* riding in state, arrayed in purple, decked with gold and precious stones and pearl, ch. xvii.; the *other*, ch. xii., in rich attire too, but of another kind, clothed with the sun, and a crown of twelve stars on her head. The other's decorament was all earthly, this woman's is all celestial. What need has she to borrow light and beauty from precious stones, who is *clothed with the sun*, and crowned with stars? She wears no

sublunary ornaments, but, which is more noble, she treads upon them; *the moon is under her feet.* Now, if you know (as you do all without doubt) which of these two is the spouse of Christ, you can easily resolve the question. The truth is, those things seem to deck religion, but they undo it. Observe where they are most used, and we shall find little or no substance of devotion under them; as we see in that apostate Church of Rome. This painting is dishonourable for Christ's spouse, and besides, it spoils her natural complexion. The superstitious use of torches and lights in the church by day, is a kind of shining, but surely not that which is commanded here. No, it is an affront done both to the sun in the heaven, and to the Sun of Righteousness in the Church.

What is meant, then, when the Church is commanded to *shine,* or *be enlightened?* These two readings give the entire sense of the word; for first, having no light of herself, she must *receive light,* and then *shew it;* first, *be enlightened,* and then *shine.* She is enlightened by Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, shining in the sphere of the gospel. This is that light that comes to her, and the glory of the Lord that arises upon her. Hence she receives her laws and form of government, and her shining is, briefly, the pure exercise of those, and conformity to them.

And the personal shining of the several members of a church, is, a comely congruity with pure worship and discipline; and it is that which now is most needful to be urged. Every Christian soul is personally engaged first to be enlightened, and then to shine; and we must draw our light for ourselves from that same source that furnishes the Church with her public light. There is a word in the civil law, *Uxor fulget radiis mariti:* The wife shines by the rays of her husband's light. Now, every faithful soul is espoused to Christ, and therefore may well shine, seeing the Sun himself is their husband. He adorns them with a double beauty of *justification* and *sanctification:* by *that,* they shine more especially to God, by *this* to men. And may not these two be signified by a double

character given to the spouse in Cant. vi. 20; *She is fair as the moon, and clear as the sun.* The lesser light is that of sanctification, *fair as the moon;* that of justification, the greater, by which *she is as clear as the sun.* The sun is perfectly luminous, but the moon is but half enlightened; so, the believer is perfectly justified, but sanctified only in part: his one half, his flesh, is dark; and as the partial illumination is the reason of so many changes in the moon, to which changes the sun is not subject at all, so, the imperfection of a Christian's holiness is the cause of so many waxings and wanings, and of the great inequality in his performances, whereas in the meanwhile his justification remains constantly like itself. *This* is imputed, *that* inherent. The light of sanctification must begin in the understanding, and from thence be transfused to the affections, the inferior parts of the soul, and from thence break forth and shine into action. This is then the nature of the duties, *Arise and shine.*

II. The universality of the subject, which was the second head, is this, that every man that knows Christ is here engaged to *shine* too. Neither grandeur exempts from the duty of shining, nor doth meanness exclude from the privilege of shining. Men of low condition in this world need not despair of it, for it is a spiritual act; great men need not despise it, for it is a noble act, to shine by Christ's light. In the third verse of this chapter it is said to the Church, *Kings shall come to the brightness of thy rising.* To what end, but to partake of her light and shine with her? And, indeed, the regal attire of Christ's righteousness, and the white robes of holiness, will exceeding well become kings and princes. *Give the king thy judgments, O Lord, and thy righteousness to the king's son.*

III. The third and last thing propounded, was, the force of the reason, that *Christ's presence* engages to *arise and shine.* Wherein it is supposed that Christ, declared in the Gospel, is the *light* which is said here to *come,* and the *glory of the Lord* which is said to be *risen;* so that now it should be more amply cleared, how Christ is light and the glory of

the Lord, and what his coming and rising is. But of these afterwards. I shall close now with a word of exhortation.

Arise, then, *for the glory of the Lord is risen.* The day of the Gospel is too precious that any of it should be spent in sleep, or idleness, or worthless business. Worthless business detains many of us. *Arise*, immortal souls, from turmoiling in the dust, and working in the clay like Egyptian captives. Address yourselves to more noble work. There is a Redeemer come, who will pay your ransom, and rescue you from such vile service, for more excellent employment. It is strange how the souls of Christians can so much forget their first original from Heaven, and their new hopes of returning thither, and the rich price of their redemption, and, forgetting all these, dwell so low, and dote so much upon trifles. How is it that they hear not their well beloved's voice crying, *Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away?* Though the eyes of true believers are so enlightened, that they shall not sleep unto death, yet, their spirits are often seized with a kind of drowsiness and slumber, and sometimes even when they should be of most activity. The time of Christ's check to his three disciples made it very sharp, though the words are mild: *What! could you not watch with me one hour?* Shake off, believing souls, that heavy humour. *Arise*, and satiate the eye of faith with the contemplation of Christ's beauty, and follow after him till you attain the place of full enjoyment. And you others who never yet saw him, *arise*, and admire his matchless excellency. The things you esteem great, appear so but through ignorance of his greatness. His brightness, if you saw it, would obscure to you the greatest splendour of the world, as all those stars that go never down upon us, yet they are swallowed up in the surpassing light of the sun when it arises. *Stand up from the dead, and He shall give you light. Arise and work while it is day, for the night shall come wherein none can work*, says our Saviour himself. Happy are they who arise early in the morning of their youth; for the day of life is very short, and the art of Christianity long and difficult. Is it not a grievous

thing, that men never consider why they came into the world, till they be upon the point of going out again; nor think how to live, till they be summoned to die? But most of all unhappy, he who never wakens out of that pleasing dream of false happiness, till he falls into eternal misery. *Arise*, then, betimes, and prevent that sad awakening.

And, being risen, *put on your beautiful garments.* Isa. lii. 1. Draw towards you with the hand of faith the rich mantle of Christ's righteousness. *It is time to awake*, says the Apostle; and presently after, *Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.* Rom. xiii. 11, 14. And it is a wonder how a sinner can rest, while he is out of this garment; for there is no other in heaven nor on earth can make him shine to God, and so shelter him from the stroke of justice. Put him on, then, and so shine: being thus clothed, thou shalt shine in justification, and likewise in sanctity. What a privilege is it to be like God! A sanctified conscience, what can be said against it? And first have an enlightened understanding, for that is the proper seat of light. That ignorant zeal which Rome commends, exposes religion to scorn and contempt. Heat without light is the character of the fire of hell. I know, all are not tied to a like degree of knowledge, but certainly, all are obliged to have a competency and diligence for increase. Aspire, then, to be intelligent Christians, and to know well what you believe. Let your minds be *filled with knowledge*, as the Apostle speaks. But let it not stop there; it must have influence into the will. *Lux est vehiculum caloris:* True light conveys heat. All the knowledge that the natural man hath of Christ, not warming his affection to Christ, is but *ignis fatuus*, a vain light—it shall never lead him to happiness. Saving light produces love, and by that acts. *Faith works by love*, says the Apostle. That breaks forth and shines in the life, in godliness, righteousness, and sobriety. Shine, then, in all these; first, in piety towards God, for this is the reflection of those rays of light back toward their source, and this will command the other two. No man that shines in godliness, will wallow in injustice and intem-

perance. Guile and wrong cannot endure the light: they that are unjust, cannot shine. And let them never offer to shine among Christians, who are not sober, but stained with riot and uncleanness. These foul enormities lay waste the conscience, and put out the light. How can any seeds of grace subsist undrowned, that are exposed to a daily deluge of cups? How can that pure Spirit that chose the likeness of a chaste dove, dwell and give light in that soul which is a nest of impure and filthy lusts? No; there can be no fellowship betwixt this celestial light, whereby we should shine, and those infernal works of darkness. Let profane men hold it a chief strain of wit to scoff at purity, but you who pretend heavenward in good earnest, and mean to shine in glory, shine here in holiness; *For without holiness no man shall see God.* And do it with these qualifications: (1.) *Constantly*,—in every estate. Let not this Divine light go out, neither by day in prosperity, nor by night in adversity. In every place. Do not shine clear, and be dark in your chamber: they that do thus *have their reward.* That is a sad word, if rightly understood. Beware of hypocrisy. (2.) Shine *progressively*, gaining still more and more victory over darkness, till you attain unmixed and perfect light. *The way of the just*, says Solomon, *is like the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.* Prov. iv. 18. (3.) Shine *humbly*, to His glory whose light you borrow; not to shew forth your own excellences, but His, *who hath called you from darkness to His marvellous light.* 1 Pet. ii. 9. If we be *children of light*, our brightness must praise the *Father of lights. Let your light so shine before men, that they, seeing your good works* (not yourselves, if you can be hid; as the sun affords its light and will scarce suffer us to look upon itself), *may glorify* (not you, but) *your heavenly Father.* Matt. v. 6. To conclude:

The pure light of the Church is revived, and the glory of the Lord *is* risen upon you, and upon this glory there shall be a defence. If God be your glory in the midst of you, He will

be likewise a wall of fire round about you. All the danger is, if we fall short in the duty of shining. But as you desire that this glory should abide and dwell amongst you, let all estates of men provoke one another to shine bright in holiness. You who either by birth or office are in eminent stations, know that you were set there to be eminent and exemplary in shining, as stars of more notable magnitude. You who are ministers of this light, know that *you are the light of the world;* and if the very light become darkness, how great will that darkness be! You that are of a lower order, know that you must shine too; for it is a common duty. There is a certain company of small stars in the firmament, which, though they cannot be each one severally seen, yet, being many, their united light makes a conspicuous brightness in the heavens, which is called the *milky way:* so, though the shining of every private Christian is not so much severally remarkable, yet, the concourse and meeting of their light together will make a bright path of holiness shine in the Church.

Now to the end we may each one shine in our measure, we must learn to turn ourselves often towards Him from whom our light is derived. Conversing with Him, will make us more and more like Him. There is a secret unknown virtue for this purpose in secret prayer and meditation. Were we more in the mount with God, our faces would shine more with men. Let us, then, rescue from the world all the time we can, to resort frequently thither, till such time as the soul, which is now often pulled down again by the flesh, shall let that mantle fall and come down no more, but shine there without spot, and be for ever satisfied with her Maker's image.

SERMON V.

PREFACE.

Art imitates nature; and the nearer it comes to nature in its effects, it is the more excellent. Grace is the new nature of a Christian, and hypocrisy that art which counterfeits it; and the more exquisite it is in imitation, it is the more plausible to men, but the more abominable to God. It may frame a spiritual man in image so to the life, that not only others, but even the hypocrite himself may admire it, and, favouring his own artifice, may be deceived so far as to say, and to think, it lives, and fall in love with it; but he is no less abhorred by the Searcher of hearts, than pleasing to himself. Surely, this mischief of hypocrisy can never be enough inveighed against. When religion is in request, it is the chief malady of the Church, and numbers die of it; though, because it is a subtile and inward evil, it be little perceived. It is to be feared there are many sick of it, who look well and comely in God's outward worship, and they may pass well in good weather, in times of peace, but days of adversity are days of trial. The prosperous estate of the Church makes hypocrites, and her distress discovers them; but if they escape such trial, there is one inevitable day coming, wherein all secret things shall be made manifest. Men shall be turned inside out; and amongst all sinners that shall then be brought before that judgment-seat, the deformedest sight shall be an unmasked hypocrite, and the heaviest sentence shall be *his* portion.

Oh! that the consideration of this would scare us out of that false disguise in time, and set us all upon the study of sincerity! Precious is that grace in God's esteem: a little of it will weigh down mountains of formal religion, in the balance of the sanctuary. Which of us have not now brought hypocrisy, more or less, into the house of God? Oh, that it were not with intention to nourish it, but with desire to be here cured of it!

For He alone who hates it so much can cure it; He alone can confer upon us that sincerity wherein He mainly delights. If we have a mind, indeed, to be endued with it, it is nowhere else to be had: we must entreat it of God by humble prayer, in the name of His well-beloved Son, by the assistance of His Holy Spirit.

[SECOND SERMON OF THE TEXT.]

Isaiah lx. 1.

Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.

Truly, light is sweet, and it is a pleasing thing to behold the sun, says the Preacher, Eccl. xi. 7. But the interchange of night with day adds to its beauty, and the longest night makes day the welcomest; as that people well know, whose situation in the world gives them a five or six months' night all of one piece. It is reported of some of them, that when they conceive their night draws towards an end, they put on their richest apparel, and climb up to the highest mountains, with emulation who shall first discover the returning light; which, so soon as it appears, they salute with acclamations of joy, and welcome it with solemn feasting, and all other testimonies of exceeding gladness. But such is the lethargy of sinful man, that he stirs not to meet his spiritual light; and, which is worse, when it comes upon him, it finds him in love with darkness. Instead of his shouts of joy for this light, many a cry must be sounded in his ears, to awaken him; and it is well, too, if at length he hear and obey this voice, *Arise, shine, for thy light is come.* It is clear that the words contain a *command*, and the *reason* of it: the *command* to a twofold act; the *reason* under two expressions, proportionately different. Good reason the Church should *arise*, when the *Lord's glory is risen upon her;* and it is very congruous she should be *enlightened* and *shine*, when *her light is come.* Of those two

acts, or duties, somewhat was formerly spoken; and the reason likewise was made use of so far as relative to those duties, and tending to their enforcement. But the meaning of the phrases in which the reason is expressed, was rather, at that time, supposed, than either duly proved or illustrated; so that it will be now expedient to consider, simply in themselves, these latter words: *Thy light is come*, and *The glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.*

So far as this prophecy hath respect to the restoration of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, that temporal deliverance, and the ensuing peace and prosperity, was their *light*, and that Divine power by which it was effected, was this *glory of the Lord.* And indeed both these expressions are frequently used in such a sense in holy writ. *When I waited for light, there came darkness*, says Job, ch. xxx. ver. 26. So Isaiah lviii. 8, and many other places. And *the glory of the Lord* is used for a singular effect of His power, John xi. 40, Isaiah lx. 18, and elsewhere. But this literal sense is but a step to elevate the Prophet to a sight of Christ's spiritual kingdom; which is usual with him, as our Saviour himself testifies of another of his prophecies: *These things said Isaiah when he saw his glory, and spake of him.* John xii. 41. It was a sight of that same glory that makes him say, *Thy light is come.*

In these words, there are three things concerning Christ, represented to the Church's view. *First*, His beauty and excellency, in that he is called *light*, and *the glory of the Lord. Secondly*, The Church's propriety and interest in him, *thy light*, and *risen upon thee;* which hath a restrictive emphasis, as the very next verse doth clearly manifest. As he is *originally* the glory of the Lord, and the light of the Lord, *lumen de lumine*, so he is *communicatively* the Church's light, and her glory too, as it is expressed in the 19th verse of the same chapter, *Thy God, thy glory.* Thus hath she both His worth, and her own right in Him, to consider. *Thirdly*, His presence, or her actual possession, *He is come, and is risen.* And in these, the Church, and each faithful soul, may find a double

spring of affection—the one of love, the other of joy. The transcendent beauty of Christ makes him the choicest object of love; and her property in him, or title to him, together with possession, is the proper cause of solid joy.

First, then, this excellency is expressed by these two characters, *light* and *the glory of the Lord.* Concerning which, it will be fit both to demonstrate that they are the proper titles of Christ, and here to be taken for him, as also to shew what they signify in him.

Indeed the Apostle, in his second epistle to the Corinthians, (ch. iii.) insists much in extolling both *the light* and *the glory* of the Gospel; and in the 4th verse of the next chapter, speaks of *the light of the glorious Gospel,* but he immediately intimates whence it hath this light and glory: *The glorious Gospel of Christ,* says he, *who is the image of God.* So that it is most unnecessary to inquire whether the Messiah, or the word that reveals him, be rather here couched under these terms of *light* and *the glory of the Lord.* These two agree so well together, and these words agree so well with them both, that it were an injury to attempt to sever them. All the difference will be this: Christ is that incomplex and substantial light, the Gospel that complex light wherein he appears. But (not to be guilty of *dark* terms, especially in a discourse of *light*) I take it in this resemblance, Christ is the sun, and the Gospel his proper sphere or heaven, wherein he gives light to his Church. He is *primarily* the glory of the Lord, and the Gospel is so by *participation,* because it declares him: so that much of that which shall be spoken here of Christ, will be secondarily to be understood of the Gospel of Christ.

That Christ is *Light,* the Scripture speaks abundantly. His own voice concerning himself, notwithstanding the cavil of the Pharisees, is above all exception, for he is truth itself: *I am the light of the world,* saith he; *he that follows me shall not walk in darkness.* John viii. 12. The Father who sent him gives him the same title: *I will give thee for a light of the Gentiles,* Isa. xlii. 6; and xlix. 6. And not to multiply

citations of the prophets and evangelists, who with one consent all magnify this Light, take the true testimony of a false prophet; and, indeed, the favourable witness of an adversary is strongest: it is that of Balaam, who saw that Christ was *light*, though, because he saw him afar off (as he says himself), and had not his eye fortified, like the true prophets, he discerned him but as a star: *There shall come a star out of Jacob.* Numb. xxiv. 17. But what need we go so far, to be certified what this light and glory of the Lord is? The Lord of glory himself, in the very next verse to the text, assures us of it: *Upon thee shall the Lord arise.* And in the 19th verse, *The Lord shall be thy everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.*

By this time, I hope, it is clear, that the Eternal Son of God, co-essential with His Father, was He who gave accomplishment to this prophecy, by appearing to the world wrapped up in the darkness of human nature. He is that *day-spring from on high*, which *hath visited us*, as old Zacharias speaks, Luke i. 78.

Among all created excellences, none can be borrowed more fitly representing Christ than that of *light*. And is it not Christ that decks his Church with supernatural beauty, and makes it indeed Κόσμος, a comely world, called out of the world? But the manifold agreement of light with Christ doth require more particular consideration.

Light is (as they call it) *primum visibile*, the first object of sight. And Jesus Christ, whom the Apostle styles *God over all, blessed for ever*, is *primum intelligibile*, the prime object of the understanding. What is then become of that Divine spark, that understanding soul, which the Father of spirits breathes into these bodies, that all our thoughts creep here below, and leave their chief and noblest object unconsidered? Which of us may not complain (though few of us do), that our souls have either no wings to elevate themselves to the contemplation of Him from whom they issued, or, if they make attempts at it, our affections, engaged to the world, make us, like a bird tied by the foot, fall presently down again into the

mire? It is high time to leave hunting shadows, and to turn our internal eye to the beholding of this Uncreated Light.

In this elementary world, Light being (as we hear) the first thing visible, all things are seen by it, and it by itself. Thus is Christ among spiritual things, in the elect world of his Church. *All things are made manifest by the Light,* says the Apostle, Ephes. v. 13, speaking of Christ, as the following verse doth evidently testify. It is in his word that he shines, and makes it a direct and convincing light, to discover all things that concern his Church and himself, and to be known by its own brightness. How impertinent, then, is that question, so much tossed by the Romish Church, How know you the Scriptures (say they) to be the word of God, without the testimony of the Church? I would ask one of them again, how they can know that it is daylight, except some one light a candle to let them see it? They are little versed in Holy Scripture who know not that it is frequently called *light;* and they are senseless who know not that light is seen and known by itself. *If our Gospel be hid,* says the Apostle, *it is hid to them that perish, the God of this world having blinded their minds against the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ.* 2 Cor. iv. 3. No wonder if such stand in need of a testimony. A blind man knows not that it is light at noon-day, but by report; but to those that have eyes, light is seen by itself.

Again, Light makes all other things that are in themselves visible, to become actually visible, as they speak: so, by the word of this substantial *Word,* Jesus Christ, all things in religion are tried and discovered. The very authority of the Church, which they obtrude so confidently, must be stopped and examined by these Scriptures, which they would make stand to its courtesy. Doctrines and worship must be tried by this light; and what will not endure this trial, must not be endured in the House of God. *To the law and to the testimony,* says the Prophet, *if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.* Isa. viii. 20.

The rays of Christ's light are displayed through both his Testaments, and in them we see Him.

But oh, how sublime is the knowledge of Him! No one is ignorant that there is light, yet, what light is, few know; the best wits are troubled to define it: so, all that bear the name of Christians acknowledge that Christ *is*, but to know *what* he is, is of marvellous difficulty. In a speculative way, unsoundable is the depth of His nature and properties. *And his generation who can declare?* says our Prophet, Isa. liii. 8. I define not, whether his eternal generation be meant, or his incarnation in time. These are mysteries that shall hold the very angels busy in admiration for ever. And as for experimental knowledge by faith, how small is the number of those that are truly acquainted with it!

Again: Light fitly resembles Christ in *purity:* it visits many impure places, and lights upon the basest parts of the earth, and yet remains most pure and undefiled. Christ sees and takes notice of all the enormities and sinful pollutions in the world; as David says of the sun, *there is nothing hid from his beams;* yea, many of those foul evils he cures, and purgeth away these pollutions; and yet he is never stained by them in the least degree. He is a physician not capable of infection; and therefore, while he dwelt among men, he shunned not publicans and sinners, but sought them rather, for with such was his business and employment. Indeed, for a frail man to be too bold in frequenting profane and obstinate persons, though with intention to reclaim them, is not always so safe. *Metus est ne attrahant.* They may pull him in, who would help them forth, and pollute him who would cleanse them. But our Saviour, the light of the world, runs no such hazard: he is stronger than the most perverse sinner, yea, than the prince of darkness himself, over whom his banners are always victorious, and purer than to be in danger of pollution. His precious blood is *a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness:* sinners are purified by it, and it is not defiled by them. Thousands have washed in it, yet it shall abide, and always shall be

most perfectly pure. *And such a high priest was needful for us, who is αμιαντος, undefiled,* and who, though conversant with sinners, to communicate to them his goodness, was yet *separate from sinners* in immunity from their evil. Heb. vii. 26.

To this agrees well that title which the prophet Malachi gives him, chap. iv. ver. 2, when he calls him the *Sun of Righteousness;* full of purity and righteousness, as the sun is of light; all luminous, without spot; subject to no eclipse in himself, his light being his own, though our sins interposed may hide him sometimes from us, as those real eclipses in the sun are rather ours, for we are deprived of light, but not the sun. Christ is in many ways most fitly called the Sun; for since all created light falls infinitely short of his worth, the prince and chief of lights, the sun, cannot but suit best, so far as may be, to set forth his excellency.

The light of the sun is neither parted nor diminished by being imparted to many several people and nations that behold it at one time; nor is the righteousness of this Sun of Righteousness either lessened to himself, or to individual believers, by many partaking of it at once: it is wholly conferred upon each one of them, and remains whole in himself. Hence it is, that not only Christ invites so liberally sinners to come to him, but even justified persons would so gladly draw all others to lay hold on this righteousness of their Redeemer; knowing well, that if all the world were enriched by it, they themselves would be no whit the poorer.

Again: the sun hath a vivifying power, not only upon plants and vegetables, but, if philosophers be right, *Sol et homo generant hominem,* it hath a special influence in the generation of man. But it is both more certainly and more eminently true of this Sun we speak of, in man's regeneration, that he is the proper and principal efficient of it. The Evangelist calls him at once, *the light and the life of men.* John i. 4. To say nothing of him as a treasure, he is the source of our spiritual life and motion.

When the sun takes its course towards us in the season of

the year, it drives away the sharp frosts and the heavy fogs of winter, it clears the heavens, decks the earth with variety of plants and flowers, and awakes the birds to the pleasant strains of their natural music. When Christ, after a kind of winter absence, returns to visit a declining church, admirable is the change that he produces; all begins to flourish by his sweet influence; his house, his worship, his people, are all clothed with a new beauty; but it is spiritual, and therefore none but spiritual eyes can discern it. When he will thus return, all the power and policy of man can no more hinder him than it could stay the course of the sun in its circle. In like manner, a deserted, forsaken soul, that can do nothing but languish and droop, while Christ withdraws himself, what inexpressible vigour and alacrity finds it at his returning! Then those graces which, while they lurked, seemed to have been lost and quite extinguished, bud forth anew with pleasant colour and fragrant smell. It is the light of His countenance that banisheth their false fears, that strengthens their faith, and cures their spiritual infirmities. This Sun is, indeed, the sovereign physician: *Unto you that fear my name, shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing under his wings.* Mal. iv. 2.

Finally, all darkness flies away before Him: it was His arising in the world that made the day break and the shadows fly away. The types and shadows of the Law were then abolished. It was His light that dispelled the mists of ignorance and idolatry, and He alone delivers the soul from the night of sin and misery produced by it. All the stars, and the moon with them, cannot make it day in the world; this is the sun's prerogative: nor can Nature's highest light, the most refined science and morality, make it day in the soul: for this is Christ's.

The common light of reason every man that comes into the world hath from Him as His Creator; but the special light of grace, they alone who are *born again* have from Him as their Saviour. Gross is the darkness of every natural mind, till Christ enlighten it; it can neither discern nor *receive* the

things of God, οὐ δέχεται. *Ye were darkness*, says the Apostle, *but now are ye light in the Lord.* Ephes. v. 8. The natural mind is nothing else but a mass of darkness; and the companion of darkness is confusion, as it was in the mass of the world before light was created. And what is there under heaven more confused than a carnal mind; the affections quite out of order, and though all naught, yet sometimes fighting one with another, and continually hurrying the judgment whither they please? Now, to dissipate this darkness, and remedy this confusion, Christ shines externally in his word. But too much daily experience testifies, that this is not sufficient; therefore, to those whom he will make children of the light, to meet with this outward light of his word, he gives another internal light by the Spirit. The sun can make dark things clear, but it cannot make a blind man see them: but herein is the excellency of this Sun, that He illuminates not only the *object*, but the *faculty;* doth not only reveal the mysteries of his kingdom, but opens blind eyes to behold them. And the first lineament of the renewed image of God in man, is that light in the understanding, removing not only that simple ignorance of Divine things, but those misconceits, likewise, and false principles, and that wicked pertinacy, whereof man's mind is naturally full. He who *at first commanded light to shine out of darkness*, infuseth saving *knowledge and light* into the dark soul of man. And this light (as was said) kindles love. It is *vehiculum caloris*, hath a powerful influence, begetting heat in the affections. Nor can this Divine light be ever again fully extinguished, but conducts the soul that hath received it, till it be received to the land of light and perfect happiness. Thus, in our Redeemer is *the fountain of life*, as the Psalmist speaks, and *in his light do we see light.* Psalm xxxvi. 9.

He is likewise here styled *The glory of the Lord.* In 2 Sam. iv. the ark of God is called *the glory*, but it enjoyeth that name as a type of Christ, in whom now that which the ark contained is fulfilled. The tabernacle is called *the dwelling of God's glory*, Psal. xxvi. 8, likewise typifying Him in the

tabernacle of whose human nature that glory dwells far more excellently. John i. 14. Εσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, *He dwelt in a tabernacle among us, and we saw his glory as the glory of the only begotten Son of God, full of grace and truth.* The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews calls him ἀπαύγασμα, *the brightness of his Father's glory and the character of His person.* Heb. i. 3. And under these expressions lies that remarkable mystery of the Son's eternal relation to the Father, which is rather humbly to be adored than boldly to be explained, either by God's perfect understanding of His own essence, or by any other notion. It is true, he is called *The wisdom of the Father*, but this wisdom is too wonderful for us. He is called *The Word*, but what this word means, I think, we shall not well know till we see him face to face, and contemplate him in the light of glory. Meanwhile we may see him to be *the glory of the Lord*, in a safer way, and in a sufficient measure to guide us to that clear vision reserved above for us. *We saw his glory*, says that sublime Evangelist. But how could this excellent glory be seen by sinful men, and not astonish and strike dead the beholders? *He was made flesh and dwelt among us*, says he, *and* so *we saw his glory.* That majesty which we could never have looked upon, he veiled with human flesh, that we might not die, yea, live, by seeing him. There he stood behind the wall, and shewed himself through the lattice. *In him dwelt the fulness of the Godhead*, Col. ii. 9, but it was σωματικῶς, *bodily:* for who could have endured the splendour of the Godhead's fulness, if that cloud of his body had not been drawn betwixt? And through it did shine that grace and truth, that wisdom and power, in the work of our redemption, whereby he was clearly manifested to be *the glory of the Lord.*

Surely, we need not now ask the Church, or a believing soul, *What is thy beloved more than another?* Or if we do, well may she answer, *He is the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely;* for he is *the light of the world*, and *the glory of the Lord.* Let not the numerous titles of earthly

potentates be once admitted into comparison with these. If we believe David, Psal. lxii. 9, the stateliest things and persons in the world, being balanced with *vanity* itself, are found lighter than *it;* and shall we offer to weigh them with Christ? If we knew him rightly, we would not sell the least glance or beam of this light of his countenance, for the highest favour of mortal man, though it were constant and unchangeable, which it is not. It is ignorance of Christ, that maintains the credit of those vanities we admire. The Christian that is truly acquainted with Him, enamoured with the brightness of his beauty, can generously trample upon the smilings of the world with the one foot, and upon her frownings with the other. If he be rich or honourable, or both, yet, he glories not in that, but Christ, who is *the glory of the Lord*, is even then his chiefest glory; and the light of Christ obscures that worldly splendour in his estimation. And as the enjoyment of Christ overtops all his other joys, so it overcomes his griefs. As that great light drowns the light of prosperity, so it shines bright in the darkness of affliction: no dungeon so close that it can keep out the rays of Christ's love from his beloved prisoners. The world can no more take away this light, than it can give it. *Unto the just ariseth light in darkness*, says the Psalmist; and, *When I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me*, says the Church, Mic. vii. 8. And as this light is a *comfort*, so, it is likewise a *defence*, which suffers no more of distress to come near the godly, than is profitable for them. Therefore we find very frequently in Scripture, where this light and glory is mentioned, protection and safety jointly spoken of: *The Lord is my light, and withal my salvation: whom shall I fear?* says David, Psal. xxvii 1. *The Lord is a sun, and He is a shield too.* Psal. lxxxiv. 21. And truly I think him shot-proof that hath the sun for his buckler. And for glory. *Upon all the glory shall be a defence*, says our Prophet, ch. iv. ver. 5. And the prophet Zechariah, where he calls the Lord the Church's *glory in the midst of her*, calls him likewise, *a wall of fire round about her*, ch. ii. ver. 4.

The only way, then, to be safe, is to keep this light and the glory entire. To part with any part of this glory, is to make a breach in that wall of fire ; and if that be a means of safety, let all men judge. No, keep it whole, and then they must come through the fire, who will assault you. Nor is this light only defensive of the church that embraceth it, but it is likewise destructive of all adverse powers. See a clear testimony for this in Isa. x. 17, 18. *And the light of Israel shall be for a fire and his Holy One for a flame, and* (speaking there of the Assyrians) *it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briers in one day, and shall consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field, both soul and body, and they shall be as when a standard-bearer fainteth.* Let ever then the Church of God entirely observe this *light* and *glory of the Lord ;* and she shall undoubtedly be preserved by it.

But to close in a word, first, to those who know this light, and then, to those who are yet strangers to it.

You who know Christ, glory in him perpetually. Well may He be your glory, when he is the glory of the Lord. There are some who pretend love to Christ, and yet, a taunting word of some profane miscreant will almost make them ashamed of him. How would they die for Christ, who are so tender as not to endure a scoff for him ? Where is that spirit of Moses, who accounted the very *reproaches of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt?* Heb. xi. 26. Oh, learn to glory in Christ; think highly of him, and speak so too. Methinks it is the discourse in the world that becomes Christians best, to be speaking one to another honourably of Jesus Christ. And of all men, the preachers of his gospel should be most frequent in this subject. This should be their great theme, to extol and commend the Lord Jesus, that they may inflame many hearts with his love; and best can they do this, who are most strongly taken with this love themselves. Such will most gladly abase themselves, that Christ may be magnified ; and whatsoever be their excellences, they will still account Christ their glory. And they are richly repaid, for

he accounts them his glory. This would seem a strange word, if it were not the Apostle's: *They are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ.* 2 Cor. viii. 23. Delight who will, either in sloth and ignorance on the one hand, or in vain speculations and strains of frothy wit on the other; surely, those preachers only shall be approved in the great day, who have constantly endeavoured, in their measure, to speak the best and fittest they could for their Master's advantage. And happy those Christians, of what estate soever, who in all estates make Christ their glory, and in all actions have their eye fixed upon his glory, who is their light and the glory of the Lord!

Now to those who are strangers to him, (Would to God none that are to be spoken to were such!) to them, I say, notice is given both of the excellency and the necessity of Christ. Though it were possible to grope the way to happiness in the dark, yet, none will deny but to be conducted thither by a constant light is both more safe and more delightful. But were there any possibility of attaining that end without this light, the neglect of it were not altogether so strange. The wonder of all is this, that Christ alone being both that *life*, and the *way* to it, and the *truth*, or light, that guides in that way (John xiv. 6), yet, Christians (so called) should esteem and look after him as little as if he were wholly needless. What meanest thou, O besotted sinner? Is it so light a thing to die in thy sins, and to die eternally for them, that thou wilt not so much as open and admit the light of salvation? What wilt thou pretend in that terrible day? Though all other kinds of people should offer some excuse, thou who hast heard the Gospel shalt be speechless. For not only shall the rigour of justice condemn thee, but mercy itself shall plead against thee; for thou hast despised it. That light did come, and was not embraced, shall be the main condemnation. How many thousands who make no doubt of Heaven, yet, shall then fall short of it! It is not a superficial profession, that will then pass current. It is not some public sighs and groans, from an unsanctified heart, which either come from

custom, or some present touch of the word, nor yet is it some sudden risings of inward affection towards Christ, upon the report of his worth, that shall then serve the turn. The intellective knowledge of Christ, the distinct understanding, yea, the orthodox preaching of his Gospel, the maintaining of his public cause, and suffering for it, shall not then be found sufficient. Only that peculiar apprehension of Christ, those constant flames of spiritual love, that even course of holy walking in his light, shall be those characters whereby Christ shall own his children, and admit them into the inheritance of perfect light. One of the speakers in the book of Job, discoursing of the prosperity of the ungodly, calls it but *his candle*, and tells how long it can last: *his candle* (says he) *shall be put out with him*. And that's the longest term of it: if it last his lifetime, it shall convey him no further: he goes into eternity in the dark, and therefore, as St. John says, he knows not whither he goeth. *Quò nunc abibis?* said that Emperor [Adrian] to his soul. Is it not a sad thing, when the soul that knows no other than worldly light, must take leave of it, and enter into eternal darkness, there to be incessantly tormented with present anguish, and the frightful expectation of the last judgment, when it must take again that body which was the accomplice of its wickedness, to be partaker of its punishment; when it shall have a double misery, to behold crowns of immortality distributed to the godly, after the short combats of this life, and itself thrust out among the devils? Then shall all men be in some way sensible what is the worth of this now contemned *light*, the Lord Jesus Christ; the greatest number too late, for they shall be banished from it for ever. But the righteous shall then most perfectly know, and for ever enjoy this light and glory of the Lord. *To whom, with the Father of lights, and the Spirit of grace, be eternity of praise and honour!*

SERMON VI.

PREFACE.

WHAT *shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* said our Saviour, who was to lay down a ransom for it, and knew well that it would cost infinitely more than the world was worth. Yet, the most of men value their own souls at a far lower rate than the whole world, losing them for broken morsels of it; yea, many times for vain hopes that are never accomplished. And as these men make a miserable bargain, so, on the contrary, they that lose the world, or any thing worldly, yea, though it were the whole, to save their souls, make a profitable loss of it. Nature teaches men to hazard and lose all for the life of the body, rather than lose it, (although it proves many times very uncomfortable by the loss of these outward things,) and yet, the most part of men pass their whole life-time without one serious thought of the excellency and importance of their souls, whose life and happiness is of a higher nature, and neither consists in, nor depends upon, any thing here below. Hence it is, that while they use the helps of this present life, and the defences of it when it is in danger, and use them with so much diligence and attention, the means of that better life of their better part, their souls, they either use not at all, or so slightly and coldly that they never find salvation in them. You may find it some way in yourselves: the threatenings and preparations of men against you, have awakened and roused you more to think upon means of your temporal safety; but how few are sensible and afraid of the wrath of God, who, as our Saviour tells us, can kill both body and soul, and cast them into hell! You want not frequent advertisement from the word of God, so plentifully preached, that many are perishing, one part in gross ignorance of God, another in profane and licentious living, and the greatest part in a formal and lifeless profession of religion, without the power

of it; and yet, where are they who lay it to heart, and bestir themselves to rescue their souls from destruction? Certainly, whatsoever men profess, it is unbelief that is the cause of impenitence. Men are not convinced of the purity of God s nature, nor sensible of the impurity of their own; therefore they apply not themselves in good earnest to the work of repentance, and to reformation, the liveliest part of it. Labour, then, for a more active and practical knowledge of God and Divine truths, such as may humble and renew your souls; not only that you may be delivered from outward troubles that threaten you, but much more, that you may escape the wrath to come. And because neither the word preached, nor judgments, nor mercies that are set before you, are sufficient to quicken a dead soul, or soften a hard heart, without the effectual concurrence of the Spirit of God, let us have recourse to the throne of grace, by humble and earnest prayer, in the name and mediation of Jesus Christ.

Psalm xlii. 8.

Yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness in the day-time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.

Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upwards, saith Eliphaz, Job v. 7. And as it is the corruption and sinfulness of his birth and nature, that has exposed him to trouble, so nature usually sets him at work, to look out for such things as may preserve and deliver him from trouble, or, at least, mitigate and temper the bitterness of it. And because there is not any one worldly thing that hath either certainty or sufficiency enough to serve at all times, therefore worldly and natural men are forced to make use of variety, and are but badly served with them all. The believing soul hath but one comfort whereon he relies, but it is a great one, which alone weighs down all the rest. *Bread strengthens, and wine makes glad the heart of man,* Psal. civ. 15. But *God is the strength of*

my heart, says the Psalmist, Psal. lxxxiii. 26, and the *gladness* of it too: *Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than they have when their corn and wine increaseth.* Psal. iv. 7. And therefore, while the rest are seeking after some scattered crumbs of goodness in the creatures, and saying, *Who will shew us any good?* he fixes his choice upon this one thing, *the light of God's countenance.* And it is the constant assurance of this, that upholds him. *Waves* beat upon him, yea, and *go over him; yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness* to shine upon him.

In this Psalm we may perceive the Psalmist full of perplexed thoughts, and that betwixt strong desires and griefs, and yet, in the midst of them, now and then, some advantage, and intermixing strains of hope with his sad complaints: for immediately before, we heard nothing but the impetuous noise of many waters, *deep calling unto deep*, in the former verse; we have here, as it were, a touch of the sweet sound of David's harp: *Yet the Lord will command His loving-kindness in the day-time, and in the night His song shall be with me.*

In the words we have *David's confidence*, and *David's purpose;* the one suiting very well with the other. His *confidence* in God's loving-kindness: *Yet the Lord will command His loving-kindness.* And his *purpose: And in the night His song shall be with me.*

It is true, the latter words, *In the night His song shall be with me*, may be taken as a part of the expression of his confidence, taking the *song* for the matter or subject of the song, the *goodness of God:* as if he should say, Both in the day and in the night, I shall find the sweet fruits of God's favour and loving kindness. But not excluding that, I rather take it to be intended as his *resolution*, that it should be his custom, in the quiet season of the night, to look back upon God's goodness manifested to him in the actions and occurrences of the day; and thus entertaining his soul with that secret discourse, he would stir it up to the praises of his God, and withal, would join prayer for the continuance and further manifestation

of it. David (as was hinted before) intermixes strains of hope, not that faint and common hope of *possibility* or *probability*, that after stormy days it may be better with him, but a *certain hope* that shall never make *ashamed;* such a *hope* as springs from *faith*, yea, in effect, is one with it. Faith rests upon the goodness and truth of Him who hath promised, and Hope, raising itself upon faith so established, stands up and looks out to the future accomplishment of the promise. Therefore the Apostle calls Faith, *the substance of things hoped for*, ὑπόστασις, *and the evidence of things not seen.* Heb. xi. 1. Of all other hope it is *true, Spes est nomen boni incerti:* It is the name of uncertain good. But this can say, *The Lord will command his loving-kindness.*

The Lord will command.] What a sudden change is here! Would you think this were the same man that was even now almost overwhelmed? Thus faith always conquers, though seldom, or never, without a hard conflict; not only assaulted by troubles without, but, which is worse, by incredulity within; nor assaulted only, but many times brought under; yet does it not succumb and give over, knowing that even after many foils, yet in the end it shall overcome.

His *confidence* you may consider, first, *oppositely*, and then, *positively*, or simply in itself. Oppositely both to his present trouble, and to his complaints, wherein this trouble is expressed; and that is fitly implied, though it be not in the original.

Though the multitude and weight of Job's afflictions did force out of him some bitter words, and made him look back upon the day of his birth, and curse it; yet, faith recovers him from his distemper, and makes him look forward with joy, even as far as to the blessed day of his resurrection: *I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet, in my flesh shall I see God.* Job xix. 25. The former words of impatience he spake indeed, but he adheres to *these*, and wishes that they were *written with an*

iron pen, and engraven to abide for ever. Therefore we hear of him again in Scripture, as a *righteous* and *patient* man, but of these words of his impatience, not a word. In the lxxviith Psalm, what sad expostulations are those the Psalmist uses, *Will he be favourable no more? Is His mercy clean gone for ever? Doth His promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath He in anger shut up his tender mercies?* But see how he corrects them, ver. 10. *Then I said, this is my infirmity, but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.* Thus Jonah (ch. ii. ver. 3, 4) speaks in a strain much like this; but there it was literally true, that God had *cast* him *into the deep.* And here, *deep calls unto deep*, yet, in the midst of those deeps, faith is not drowned; you see it lifts up its head above water: *Yet the Lord will command*, &c. Yea, though it takes particular notice of God's hand in the affliction, yet, it goes not to another hand for comfort: it is *Thy* waves and *Thy* billows; yet, that same God whose waves are like to destroy me, will ere long *command His loving-kindness to shine upon me.* So Job xiii. 15. *Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.* A wonderful expression of faith! He says not, Though He afflict me sore, but, Though He *slay* me; not, Though evil men or Satan should do it, but, Though *He* slay me, yet will I trust in *Him.* What troubled mind can imagine any thing harder against itself than this?

1. Learn, then, to check those excessive doubts and fears, by some such resolute word as this. Turn the promise, first upon thyself, and then upon God. Consider that He hath promised life eternal to believers, and then say, Though I saw His hand as it were lifted up to destroy me, yet, from that very hand will I expect salvation; for I have His word engaged for it, that if I believe, I shall be saved. I do not say, that a soul under temptation can assure itself, that God is already reconciled to it; and herein possibly lies oftentimes the mistake; for this reflex act of assurance, though it be our duty to seek after it, is itself rather a gift and reward than a

duty. But the direct and proper act of faith is of perpetual use and necessity, and then most when there is least sense of assurance. And it is no other than a recumbency or reliance, a rolling over of the soul upon free mercy. That which breeds us much perplexity, is, that we would invert God's order. If I knew, say some, that the promise belonged to *me*, and that Christ were a Saviour to *me*, I could believe. That is to say, I would first see, and then believe. But the true method is just contrary. *I had fainted*, says David, *unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord.* He believed it first, and saw it afterwards. And in this same Psalm, labouring to still his disquieted soul by elevating it above his troubles to look upon his God, he says to it, *Hope in Him now*, and, ere it be long, *thou shalt praise Him for the help of His countenance*, even while His countenance is withheld. And thus faith ought to triumph over spiritual fears and difficulties.

2. How incongruous is it, that outward dangers or trials should over-match it! Will you trust God, upon His word, for salvation and eternal happiness, and be diffident for the safety and needful blessings of this temporal life, which life, in comparison, is but for a moment, and the best things of it but dross? Consider that you dishonour faith exceedingly, and degenerate from the believing saints of former ages. Indeed, the promises of this life and that which concerns it, though godliness hath them, yet, they are not so absolute, nor are they so absolutely needful for you. But considering the wisdom and love of your Heavenly Father, learn to compose your minds by it.

I will not be afraid, though ten thousands of the people set themselves against me round about, says David. Psal. iii. 6. And lest you think him singular, in the xlvith Psalm, it is the joint voice of the whole Church of God: *We will not fear, though the earth be removed, and the mountains be cast into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled; though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city*

of God: the holy place of the tabernacle of the most high God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved. That is the way to be immoveable in the midst of troubles, as a rock amidst the waves. When God is in the midst of a kingdom or city, He makes it firm as Mount Sion, that cannot be removed. When He is in the midst of the soul, though calamities throng about it on all hands, and roar like the billows of the sea, yet, there is a constant calm within, such a peace as the world can neither give nor take away. On the other side, what is it but want of lodging God in the soul, and that in His stead the world is in the midst of men's hearts, that makes them shake like the leaves of trees at every blast of danger? What a shame is it, seeing natural men, by the strength of nature, and by help of moral precepts, have attained such undaunted resolution and courage against outward changes, that yet they, who would pass for Christians, are so soft and fainting, and so sensible of the smallest alterations! The advantage that we have in this regard is infinite. What is the best ground-work of a philosopher's constancy, but as moving sands in comparison of the Rock that we may build upon? But the truth is, that either we make no provision of faith for times of trial, or, if any we have, we neither know the worth nor the use of it, but lay it by, as a dead unprofitable thing, when we should most use and exercise it. Notwithstanding all our frequenting of God's house, and our plausible profession, is it not too true, that the most of us either do not at all furnish ourselves with those spiritual arms that are so needful in the militant life of a Christian, or we learn not how to handle them, and are not in readiness for service? As was the case of that improvident soldier, whom his commander found mending some piece of his armour, when they were to give battle. It were not amiss, before afflictions overtake us, to try and train the mind somewhat by supposing the very worst and hardest of them; to say, What if the waves and billows of adversity were swelled and flowing in upon me: could I then believe? God hath said, *I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee,* with a

heap of negations: *In no wise, I will not.* He hath said, *When thou passest through the fire and through the water, I will be with thee.* These I know, and can discourse of them; but could I repose and rest upon them in the day of trial? Put your souls to it. Is there any thing or person that you esteem and love exceedingly? Say, *What if I should lose this?* Is there some evil that is naturally more contrary and terrible to you than many others? Spare not to present that to the imagination too, and labour to make faith master of it beforehand, in case it should befal you; and if the first thought of it scare you, look upon it the oftener, till the visage of it become familiar to you, that you start and scare no more at it. Nor is there any danger in these thoughts. Troubles cannot be brought the nearer by our thus thinking on them; but you may be both safer and stronger by breathing and exercising of your faith in supposed cases. But if you be so tender spirited, that you cannot look upon calamities so much as in thought or fancy, how would you be able for a real encounter? No, surely. But the soul that hath made God his stay, can do both. See it in that notable resolution of the Prophet, Hab. iii. 17: *Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength.* And in that of David, Psal. xxiii. 4: *Yea,* says he, *though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me.* You see how faith is as cork to his soul, keeping it from sinking in the deeps of afflictions. Yea, that big word which one says of his morally just man, is true of the believer: *Si fractus illabatur orbis—Though the very fabric of the world were falling about him, yet would he stand upright and undaunted in the midst of its ruins.*

In this *confidence,* considered in itself, we may observe,

1. The *Object* of it; *The loving kindness of the Lord.* 2. The manner or way by which he expects to enjoy it. *The Lord will command it.* 3. The time; *In the day.*

1. The object: *His loving kindness.* He says not, *The Lord will command my return to the house of God,* or, *will accomplish my deliverance from the heavy oppression and sharp reproaches of the enemy,* which would have answered more particularly and expressly to his present griefs, but, *will command His loving kindness.* And the reason of his thus expressing himself I conceive to be twofold. [1.] In the assurance of this, is necessarily comprised the certainty of all other good things. This special favour and benignity of the Lord doth engage His power and wisdom (both which you know are infinite) to the procurement of every thing truly good for those whom He so favours. Therefore it is, that David chooses rather to name the streams of particular mercies in this their living Source and Fountain, than to specify them severally. Nor is it only thus more compendious, but the expression is fuller too, which are the two great advantages of speech. And this I take to be the other reason: [2.] A man may enjoy great deliverances, and many positive benefits from the hand of God, and yet have no share in *His loving kindness.* How frequently doth God heap riches, and honour, and health on those He hates, and the common gifts of the mind too, wisdom and learning, yea, the common gifts of His own Spirit, and give a fair and long day of external prosperity to those on whom He never vouchsafed the least glance of His favourable countenance! Yea, on the contrary, He gives all those specious gifts to them with a secret curse! As he gave a king in wrath to His people, so He often gives kingdoms in His wrath to kings. Therefore David looks higher than the very kingdom which God promised him and gave him, when he speaks of *His loving kindness.* In a word, he resolves to solace himself with the assurance of this, though he was stripped of all other comforts, and to quiet his soul herein, till deliverance should come; and when it should come, and whatsoever mercies with

it, to receive them as fruits and effects of this *loving kindness:* not prizing them so much for themselves, as for the impressions of that love which is upon them. And it is that image and superscription that both engages and moves him most to pay his tribute of praise. And truly, this is every where David's temper: his frequent distresses and wants never excite him so much to desire any particular comfort in the creature, as to entreat the presence and favour of God Himself. His saddest times are when, to his sense, this favour is eclipsed. *In my prosperity I said, I shall not be moved.* And what was his adversity that made him of another mind? *Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.* This verifies his position in that same Psalm, *In Thy favour is life.* Thus, in the lxiiird Psalm, at the beginning, *My soul thirsteth for Thee, in a dry land where there is no water:* not for water, where there is none, but, *for Thee, where there is no water.* Therefore he adds in verse 3, *Thy loving kindness is better than life.* And all that be truly wise, are of this mind and will subscribe to his choice. Let them enjoy this loving kindness, and prize it, because, whatever befalls them, their happiness and joy is above the reach of all calamities. Let them be derided and reproached abroad, yet still, this inward persuasion makes them glad and contented. As a rich man said, though the people hated and taunted him, yet, when he came home and looked upon his chests, *Eyomet mihi plaudo domi;* with how much better reason do believers bear out external injuries! What inward contentment is theirs, when they consider themselves as truly enriched with the favour of God! And as this makes them contemn the contempts that the world puts upon them, so, likewise, it breeds in them a neglect and disdain of those poor trifles that the world admires. The sum of their desires is, (as that of the Cynic's was, the sun-shine,) that the rays of the love of God may shine constantly upon them. The favourable aspect and large proffers of kings and princes would be unwelcome to them, if they should stand betwixt them and the sight of that Sun. And truly they have reason. What are

the highest things the world affords? What are great honours and great estates, but great cares and griefs well dressed and coloured over with a shew of pleasure, that promise contentment, and perform nothing but vexation? That they are not satisfying, is evident; for the obtaining of much of them doth but stretch the appetite, and teach men to desire more. They are not solid, neither. Will not the pains of a gout, of a strangury, or some such malady, (to say nothing of the worst, the pains of a guilty conscience,) blast all these delights? What relish finds a man in large revenues and stately buildings, in high preferments and honourable titles, when either his body or his mind is in anguish! And besides the emptiness of all these things, you know they want one main point, *continuance*. But the loving kindness of God hath all requisites to make the soul happy. *O satisfy us early with Thy goodness* (or *mercy*), says Moses, *that we may rejoice and be glad all our days*. Psal. xc. 14. There is *fulness* in that for the vastest desires of the soul—*satisfy us;* there is *solid contentment*—that begets true *joy and gladness;* and there is *permanency—all our days*. It is the only comfort of this life, and the assurance of a better. This were a large subject to insist on, but certainly, the naming of *His loving kindness* should beget in each heart a high esteem of it, an ardent desire after it. And if it do so with you, then know, that it is only to be found in the way of holiness. He is a holy God, and can love nothing that is altogether unlike Himself. There must always be some similitude and conformity of nature to ground kindness and friendship upon, and to maintain it. That saying is true, *Idem velle et idem nolle, firma amicitia*. What gross self-flattery is it, to think that God's loving kindness can be towards you, while you are in love with sin, which He so perfectly hates! How can the profane swearer, or voluptuous person, or the oppressor and covetous, or the close hypocrite, (worse than any of them,) rest upon the loving kindness of the Lord in the day of troubles? No, surely. But the terror of His wrath shall be added to all their other calamities; and they

shall find it heavier than all the rest. God will not pour this precious oil of gladness, this persuasion of His love, into filthy vessels. Even his own children, when they grieve and sadden His holy spirit by unholiness, shall be sadly punished by the withdrawing of those comforting and sensible expressions of His love.

Labour, then, you who as yet never tasted of this love, to know what it means. Forsake and hate that which hitherto has made you strangers to it; for if you obtain this, it shall comfort you when those things cannot, but would rather prove your greatest torment. And you who have received any testimonies of it, entertain it carefully, for it is your best comfort both in your best days and in your worst days too.

You would all gladly be delivered from the many evils that threaten you; for many they be indeed, and peace is a great blessing. But suppose you were secured from all those fears, and He should command a sudden calm, (which truly He can do,) would you then think yourselves happy? That life of yours which you so fear to lose by fire or sword, though you had peace, would ere long fall into the hands of some ague, or fever, or consumption, and perish by them; or at the longest a few years will end it: it is a lighted candle, which, though nobody blow out, will quickly burn out of itself. But this loving-kindness is not so short-lived: it shall last as long as your souls, and so long as it lasts, they shall be happy. Those goods that you fear shall be pillaged and spoiled in war, how many hazards are they subject to even in peace! Solomon tells you, that *riches oftentimes*, though nobody should take them away, *make themselves wings, and fly away*. And truly, many times the undue sparing of them, is but the letting of their wings grow, which makes them readier to fly away; and the contributing a part of them to do good, only clips their wings a little, and makes them stay the longer with their owner. But this by the way. Howsoever, *in the day of death, and in the day of wrath*, as Solomon says, *they profit nothing at all*. Prov. xi. 4. So then, though you may desire that God would

command deliverance for you, yet, if you would be truly happy, your greater and more earnest suit should be, that He would *command His loving-kindness* to appear to your souls. And having once obtained this, you may possibly be persecuted, and endure hard trials, but one thing is made sure, you cannot be miserable. Nor shall you want temporal mercies and preservation too, so far as they are good for you. The inward assurance of this love shall carry you strangely and sweetly through all outward vicissitudes; and when the day shall come, that all other comforts shall look pale upon you, then shall you find the worth and happiness of this more than ever before. Observe,

2. The manner in which the Psalmist expects to enjoy the object of his confidence: *The Lord will command*, make it appear to me. Sometimes God is said to shut up and hide His love from His children, and that is a mournful time with them. But we read not that he shuts *out* His love, and ceaseth altogether to have affection to those whom once He loved. And therefore, when He shews himself again, in the gracious manifestations of His mercy, He is not said to begin anew to love them, but only to *command His love*, which erewhile He had countermanded, to appear.

3. The time: *In the day*. If you have a mind to take the *day* and *night*, figuratively, for prosperous and adverse times, it would lead you, in that sense, to observe David's constancy in God's praises; which was such, that not only in the day of deliverance, but even in the night of distress, he resolved a song for God. And truly, many times God gives His children, in an afflicted condition, more sweetness of spirit, more aptitude, not only to pray, but to praise, and more spiritual delight in Himself, than in times of owtward peace and prosperity. *He giveth songs in the night*, said Job; and you know the sound of music is most delightful in the night. But to take it properly, David is confident that in the several actions and occurrences of the *day* he should find the *goodness and favourable assistance* of the Lord; and then he resolves,

(which leads to the other part of the text,) *in the night time to meditate on that goodness, and to frame a song of praise to the Author of it.*

And indeed, what is the whole thread of our life, but a checkered twist, black and white, of delights and dangers interwoven? and the happiest passing of it, is constantly to enjoy and to observe the experiences of God's goodness, and to praise Him for them. David was a wise king, and withal a valiant soldier, and yet we see he thought not this experience inconsonant with either of those two conditions. This precious book of Psalms (a great part thereof being his) testifies clearly, that prayer and praises were his great employment. A religious disposition of mind may not only consist with fortitude and magnanimity, but is indeed the best principle and cause of both, contrary to the wicked and foolish opinion of profane persons. Whether of the two, do you think, might welcome a day of battle with most courage and resolution; he that had passed the preceding night in revelling and carousing, or he that had spent it in prayer, and obtained some assurance of a better life? Truly, if they went on with equal forwardness, there is no man, except he were an atheist, but would judge the one to be brutish fury and precipitation, and the other true valour.

His song.] In the worst estate there is ever some matter of praise to be mixed with request; and truly, we may justly suspect that our neglect of praises makes our prayers unacceptable.

And my prayer.] In the best estate here below, praise must be accompanied with prayer. Our wants, and necessities, and straits, return daily upon us, and require new supplies of mercy; and prayer, if we know how to use it right, is the way to obtain them all.

To the God of my life, or, *the God that is my life.*] This word is added, as the reason of all that went before. If you ask David, why he reposeth so much upon the loving-kindness of God, what he means, to spend so much pains in praises and

prayer to God; he answers, *Because He is my life.* He is the author and preserver of my temporal life, and all the passages and accidents of it are in His hand alone. He hath also given me, and He maintains in me a spiritual life; yea, He is the life of my soul: it lives by union with Him, as my body does by union with it, and he hath laid up life eternal for me. Would Christians think thus indeed, the light of this consideration would dispel their distrustful fears. Certainly, there is atheism at the bottom of them; if not a denial or a misconceit of God, at least a forgetfulness of God. See Isa. li. 12, 13. *I, even I, am He that comforteth you. Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man, which shall be made as grass, and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth?* Consider, then, that men have no power over our present life, but by the appointment of God. And beside that, we have another life, which is infinitely more precious than this: a life spiritual, and which is the beginning of eternal life; and this is altogether out of danger from them. *Our life is hid with Christ in God.* Col. iii. 3. It is *hid*, and wicked men cannot so much as see it: how then should they take it from us, seeing it is *hid?* And that not meanly: it is *hid with Christ in God.* What then shall become of it? Read the next verse, and read it to your comfort, for there is abundance in it, if you look right upon it. *When Christ who is our life shall appear, we likewise shall appear with him in glory.* They that are in God, being united to Him through Christ, can never by any power be separated from Him. It is an indissoluble union. Death itself, that is the great dissolver of all other unions, civil and natural, is so far from untying this, that it consummates it: it conveys the soul into the nearest and fullest enjoyment of God, who is its life, where it shall not need to desire that God would *command* (or *send*) *His loving-kindness*, as it were from a distance; it shall be then at the spring-head, and shall be satisfied with His love for ever.

SERMON VII.

PREFACE.

WHEREFORE *do you spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfies not?* says the Prophet. Isa. lv. 2. All men agree in this, that they would willingly meet with some satisfying good; and yet, if you look aright upon the projects and labours of the greatest part, you shall find them flying from it, and taking much pains to be miserable. And truly, considering the darkness that is upon the soul of man, it is no great wonder to see those miss their way, and continue wandering, who hear not the voice of the Gospel to recall them, and see not its light to direct them. But this is somewhat strange, that where true happiness, and the true way to it, are propounded and set before men, so few should follow it in good earnest. If the excellency of that good did not allure them, yet, one would think that their many disappointments in all other things should drive them home to it. How often do we run ourselves out of breath after shadows! And when we think we have overtaken them, and would lay hold of them, we find nothing. And yet, still we love to befool ourselves, even against our own experience, which, we say, uses to make fools wiser. Still we choose rather to shift from one vanity to another, than to return to that Sovereign Good, that alone can fill the vastest desires of our souls; rather to run from one *broken cistern* to another, as the Prophet calls them, yea, and to take pains to *hew them out*, than have recourse to that *Fountain of living waters*. One main thing that makes men thus rove and wander, is, that they do not reflect upon their own course, nor upon themselves, what is the main end they aim at, and then see whether their way be suitable to that end. If they would be happy, (as who would not?) then surely, things that are empty, and uncertain, and certainly perishing, will not serve the turn. And

truly, as this thought would be seasonable at any time, so especially to us in these times, wherein, besides the common uncertainty of outward things, there is an apparent visible hazard that men's lives and fortunes are likely to be put to. Will you make advantage and gain of your trouble? Thus: the looser you find other things tied to you, and as it were upon a running knot, secure that one thing, and your portion in it, which is worth all the rest; yea, far above them all, and that alone which can be secured, and made certain. Wanting this, what though you had peace, and health, and all imaginable prosperity, you would still be miserable, being liable to the wrath of God, and eternal destruction. But if once united to Christ, and in him reconciled to God, and entitled to Heaven, what can fall amiss to you? You shall have joy in the midst of sorrow and affliction, and peace in the midst of war, yea, and life in death. But think not to attain this assurance, while you continue profane and God-less, not seeking it in the way of holiness, for there alone it is to be found. And withal beg it of God by humble prayer.

Psalm cxix. 136.

Rivers of waters run down mine eyes: because they keep not Thy law.

Love is the leading passion of the soul: all the rest follow the measure and motion of it, as the lower heavens are said to be wheeled about with the first.

We have here a clear instance of it in the Psalmist, who is testifying his love to God, by his esteem and love of the law or word of God. What is each of the several verses of this Psalm, but a several breathing and vent of this love, either in itself, or in the causes, or in the effects of it? Where he sets forth the excellences and utilities of God's law, there you have the *causes* of his love. His observing and studying of it, his desire to know it more and observe it better, these are the *effects* of his affection to it. The love itself he often expresseth, ver. 47, 48, 113, and ver. 140. *Thy word is pure; therefore*

Thy servant loveth it. And ver. 127. *I love Thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold.* But as scarcely accounting that love which can be uttered, how much it is, ver. 97, he expresseth it most by intimating that he cannot express it: *O, how I love Thy law!* Hence are his desires (which are love in pursuit) so earnest after it. Amongst many, that is pathetical, ver. 20. *My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto Thy judgment at all times.* Hence, likewise, his joy and delight, which are love in possession, ver. 14. *I have rejoiced in the way of Thy testimonies as much as in all riches;* and ver. 16. *I will delight myself in Thy statutes; I will not forget Thy word.* We have his hatred of things opposite, which is love's antipathy, ver. 113, *I hate vain thoughts, but Thy law do I love;* ver. 163, *I hate and abhor lying, but Thy law do I love.* And in the 139th verse you shall find his zeal, which is no other than the fire of love stirred up or blown into a flame, *My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten Thy words.* And, to omit the rest, in the 158th verse, his love to the law shews its sympathy in sorrow for the violation of the law: *I beheld the transgressors and was grieved, because they kept not Thy word.* And here you find this grief swelling to such a height, that it runs over into abundant tears. *Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not Thy law.*

The words have briefly, these *rivers* in their *channel* and *course, they run down mine eyes;* and then, in their *spring and cause,* to wit, the Psalmist's sympathy with God's law broken by men, in the latter clause of the verse, *because they keep not Thy law.* But both together clearly teach us, *That godly men are affected with deep sorrow for the sins of the ungodly.*

More particularly consider, I. The object of this affection. II. The nature of it. III. The degree or measure of it. IV. Its subject.

I. The *object* is, the Transgression of the Law, or, to take it, as in the text, *in concreto,* Men transgressors of the law: *They keep not Thy law.* It is true, *the whole creation*

groaneth under the burden of sin, in the effects of it, as the Apostle speaks, Rom. viii. 32; but sin itself is man's enemy, he being that reasonable creature to whom the law was given. Now, in the general, it is a matter of grief to a godly mind to consider the universal depravedness of man's nature; that he is *a transgressor from the womb;* that *the carnal mind is enmity against God, not subject to His law, neither*, while it remains such, *can it be.* Rom. viii. 6. And this grief will go the deeper, by remembering from whence he is fallen. When he was new come forth of the hands of his Maker, that image of God which he stamped upon him shined bright in his soul; the whole frame of it was regular and comely, the inferior faculties obeying the higher, and all of them subject unto God. But how soon was he seduced, and then what a great change ensued! *Quantum mutatus ab illo!* There is ever since such a tumult and confusion in the soul, that it cannot hear the voice of God's law, much less obey and keep it. Hence is that complaint of the Psalmist oftener than once, *They are all gone out of the way, and become abominable: there is none that doth good, no, not one. Mundus immundus,* ἐν ἀδικίᾳ κεῖται, *lies buried in it*, as the word is used in the inscription of tombs, ἔνθαδε κεῖται. Look abroad in the world, and what shall ye see but a sea of wickedness over the face of the whole, which draws from a godly, discerning eye that beholds it, these *rivers of tears?* The greatest part not knowing the true God, nor the true religion, and the true way of His worship; and for those that do, yet how unlike are they to it in their lives! The reformed churches this way, how unreformed are they in a great part!

But more particularly to branch this out a little in respect to several sorts of men, this godly grief is a very large sphere; it will extend to remote people, remote every way, not only in place, but in manners and religion, even to heathens and gross idolators. Yea, the very sins of enemies, and of such as are professed enemies to God, yet move the tender-hearted Christian to sorrow and compassion. *Of whom I now tell you weeping,*

says St. Paul, *that they are enemies to the cross of Christ.* Phil. iii. 18. *Enemies*, and yet he speaks of them *weeping.* What he writes concerning them, he would have written in tears, if that had been legible. Thus you see the *extension* of this grief. But yet, out of all question, it will be more *intense* in particulars of nearer concernment. It is the burden of the pious man's heart, that His law who made the world and gives being to all things, should be so little regarded, and so much broken through all the world; but yet more especially that, in His own church, amongst His own people, transgression should abound. Sins within the Church are most properly scandals. God manifests Himself, so to speak, most sensible of those, and therefore the godly man is so too. Whether they be the continual enormities of licentious and profane persons, which are by external profession in the face of the visible Church, (though, indeed, they be in it but as *spots* and *blemishes*, as the Apostle speaks, 2 Pet. ii. 13,) or whether it be the apostacy of hypocrites; or, which sometimes falls out, the gross falls of true converts; all these are the great grief of the godly. The relations of men, either natural or civil, will add something too. This sorrow will, in such cases, be greater than ordinary in a Christian; he will melt it in a particular tenderness for the sins of his kindred, parents, or children, husband, or wife; and most of all, ministers will grieve for the sins of their people. How pathetically does this appear in St. Paul! *And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness, and fornication, and lasciviousness, which they have committed*, 2 Cor. xii. 21. A man cannot but be more particularly touched with the sins of that nation, and of that city, and congregation, and family, whereof he is a member. So we read of Lot, 2 Pet. ii. 8: *For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul, from day to day, with their unlawful deeds.* The sins of more eminent persons, either in Church or Com-

monwealth, will most affect a prudent Christian, because their inclinations and actions import the public much. Therefore the Apostle, when he had exhorted to *supplications and prayers for all men*, particularly mentions *kings*, and *such as are in authority*. 1 Tim. i. 2. And truly, when they are abused by misadvice and corrupt counsel, some of these tears were very well spent, if poured forth before God in their behalf; for *in His hand*, as that wise king confesseth, *are their hearts*, there compared to *rivers of waters;* let their motion be never so impetuous, yet *He turneth them whithersoever He pleaseth*. Prov. xxi. 1. And who knows but *these* rivers of waters, these tears, may prevail with the Lord to reduce the violent current of that river, a king's heart, from the wrong channel?

II. But to proceed: the second thing to be considered in this affection, is, the *nature* of it. (1.) It is not a stoical apathy, and affected carelessness; much less a delightful partaking with sinful practices. (2.) Not a proud setting off of their own goodness, with marking the sin of others, as the Pharisee did in the gospel. (3.) Not the derision and mocking of the folly of men, with that *laughing philosopher;* it comes nearer to the temper of the *other* who *wept* always for it. It is not a bitter, bilious anger, breaking forth into railings and reproaches, nor an upbraiding insultation. Nor is it a vindictive desire of punishment, venting itself in curses and imprecations, which is the rash temper of many, but especially of the vulgar sort. The disciples' motion to Christ was far different from that way, and yet he says to them, *You know not of what spirit ye are*. They thought they had been of Elijah's spirit, but he told them they were mistaken, and did not know of what a spirit they were in that motion. Thus, heady zeal often mistakes and flatters itself. We find not here a desire of fire to come down from Heaven upon the breakers of the law; but such a grief as would rather bring water to quench it, if it were falling on them. *Rivers of waters run down mine eyes.*

III. The *degree* of this sorrow: it is vehement, not a light, transient dislike, but a deep resentment, such as causeth not some few sighs, or some drops of tears, but *rivers—Palge maijim. Pelagus aquarum.* It is true, the *measure and degree* of sorrow for sin, whether their own or others, are different in divers persons, who are yet true mourners; and they are also different in the same person, at divers times, not only upon the difference of the cause, but even where the cause is equal, upon the different influence and working of the Spirit of God. Sometimes it pleaseth Him to warm and melt the heart more abundantly, and so He raises these *rivers*, in those eyes, to a higher tide than ordinary; sometimes they remove again. But yet, this godly sorrow is always serious and sincere; and that is the other quality here remarkable in it. It is not a histrionical weeping, only in public; for the speech is here directed to God, as a more frequent witness of these tears than any other; who is always the witness of the sincerity of them, even when they cannot be hid *from the eyes of men.* For I deny not but they may, and should, have vent in public, especially at such times as are set apart for solemn mourning and humiliation. Yet, even then, usually these streams run deepest, where they are stillest and most quietly conveyed. But surely they should not be fewer and less frequent, alone, than in company, for that is a little subject to suspicion. See Jer. ix. 1. *Oh, that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people.* And xiii. 17: *But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride, and mine eyes shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive.*

IV. The *subject* of this affection is, not the ungodly themselves, who are professed transgressors of this law; they rather make *a sport of sin,* as Solomon speaks; they play and make themselves merry with it, as the Philistines did with Samson, till it brings the house down about their ears; but the godly are they that are affected with this sorrow, such as are careful

observers of the law themselves, and mourn first for their own breaches: for these are the only fit mourners for the transgression of others.

Now to inquire a little into the *cause* of this, why the breaking of God's law should cause such sorrow in the godly, as here breaketh forth into abundance of tears. We shall find it very reasonable if we consider, 1. The nature of Sin, which is the *transgression*, or breach, *of the law*, as the Apostle defines it. 2. The nature of this sorrow and these tears. 3. The nature of the godly.

1. Sin is the greatest evil in the world; yea, truly, in comparison, it alone is worth the name of *evil*, and therefore may justly challenge sorrow, and the greatest sorrow. The greatest of evils it is, both *formally*, in that it alone is the defilement and deformity of the soul, and *causally*, being the root from whence all other evils spring; the fruitful womb that conceives and brings forth all those miseries that either man feels, or hath cause to fear. Whence are all those personal evils incident to men in their estates, or in their bodies, or minds, outward turmoils and diseases, and inward discontents, and death itself, in all the kinds of it; are they not all the fruits of that bitter root? Whence arise those public miseries of nations and kingdoms, but from the epidemic national sins of the people, as the deserving and procuring cause at God's hand, and withal, oftentimes from the ambitious and wicked practices of some particular men, as the working and effecting causes? So that every way, if we follow these evils home to their original, we shall find it to be sin, or the breaking of God's law. Ungodly men, though they meddle not with public affairs at all, yea, though they be faithful and honest in meddling with them, yet, by reason of their impious lives, are traitors to their nation: they are truly the incendiaries of states and kingdoms. And these mourners, though they can do no more, are the most loyal and most serviceable subjects, bringing tears to quench the fire of wrath, *rivers of waters*. And therefore, sorrow and tears are not only most due to sin, as the greatest

of evils, but they are best bestowed upon it, if they can do any thing to its redress, because that is both the surest and most compendious way to remedy all the rest, sin being the source and spring of them all.

This is the reason why Jeremiah, ch. ix. ver. 1, when he would weep for the *slain* of his people, is straightway led from that to bewail the *sin* of his people, ver. 2, 3. And in his Book of *tears* and *lamentations*, he often reduces all these sad evils to sin, as causing them, particularly ch. v., ver. 16: *The crown is fallen from our head. Wo unto us, that we have sinned!* He turns the complaint more to the sin than to the affliction.

2. Consider the nature of these tears. Tears spent for worldly crosses, are all lost; they run all to waste; they are *lachrymæ inanes*, empty, fruitless things. But tears shed for the breach of God's law are the means to quench God's wrath. The prayers and tears of some few may avert the punishment of many, yea, of a whole land. And if not so, yet are they not lost; the mourners themselves have always benefit by them: as you have it in that known place, Ezek. ix. 4, they that mourned for the common abominations were *marked*, and the common desolation took not hold on them. This mourning for other men's wickedness, both testifies and preserves the godly man's innocence. I say, it preserves it, as well as testifies it: it keeps him from the contagion of that bad air he lives in; for without this, sin would soon grow familiar. It is good for men to keep up and maintain in their souls a dislike of sin; for when once it ceaseth to be displeasing to a man, it will, before long, begin to be pleasing to him.

3. If we consider the nature of the godly, we shall see this mourning suit with it exceedingly, both in regard of his relation to God, and to man. God is his Father, and therefore it cannot but grieve him much, to see Him offended and dishonoured. Love to God, and consequently to His law, and love to men, and desire of their good, are the spring of these *rivers*. A godly man is tender of God's glory and of His law;

every stroke that it receives, striketh his heart: and he hath bowels of compassion to men, and would be glad if they were converted and saved. He considers every man as his brother, and therefore is sorrowful to see him run the hazard of perishing in sin. The former sympathy, whereby the godly man tenders the glory of God, is from his piety: this latter, whereby he pities the misery of man, is from his charity. And from these flow the *rivers that run down his eyes.*

To be too sensible of worldly crosses, and prodigal of tears upon such slight occasions, is little better than childish or womanish; but those tears that flow from love to God and grief for sin, have neither uncomeliness nor excess in them. Abundance of them will beseem any man who is a Christian. Let profane men judge it a weakness to weep for sin, yet, we see David do it. Men of arms and valour need not fear disparagement by weeping thus: it is the truest magnanimity, to be sensible of the point of God's honour, which is injured by sin.

Again, the consideration of this truth will discover the world guilty of very much ingratitude to godly men. It hath always been the custom of profane persons, to seek to brand religion and godliness with disloyalty and turbulency, and to make it pass for an enemy to the peace and prosperity of states and kingdoms. You see clearly with what affection religion furnishes men towards the public, causing them to mourn for common sins, and so to prevent, as far as in them lies, common calamities. And this is of no little consequence; for truly, it is not foreign power, so much as sin at home, that ruins kingdoms. All the winds that blow without the earth, be they never so violent, stir it not; only that which is within its own bowels makes an earthquake. It was a grave answer of Epaminondas, being asked what he was doing solitary and pensive in the time of solemn mirth and feasting: *While my countrymen,* said he, *are so peaceably feasting, I am thinking on the best means to preserve that peace to them, that it may continue.* Which, a little altered, is applicable to the

godly. They are oftentimes mourning for the sins, and praying for the peace, of the places where they live; when, in the meantime, the greatest part are multiplying sin, and so forfeiting their peace.

Rivers of waters.] "This is a mournful, melancholy life that these Precisians lead," says the worldling. Yes, truly, if there were no more in it than what he can perceive and judge of. But besides the full joy laid up for them, and the beginnings of it here, there is even in this mourning an unknown sweetness and delight. The philosopher says even of common tears, that there is some kind of pleasure in them, as some things please the taste by their very tartness. But of these tears, they that know them, know it to be eminently true that they are pleasant. But be this exercise as sad as the profane call it, yet why observe they not that they themselves are much the cause of it? As they may read here: *Because they keep not God's law.*

But to pass by divers inferences that the words afford, let us take notice of the duty here practised, and how much we are all obliged to the present practice of it. Who will deny that we have too much matter and occasions of it? Besides the sorrow of Sion, and particularly the blood-shedding and distress of our brethren, and our own danger, what corner of the land, what rank or condition of people is there, that abounds not in gross and heinous violations of God's law? *They keep not Thy law:* magistrates and judges turning judgment into gall and wormwood; ministers remiss in that great care, the care of souls; people wallowing in ungodliness and uncleanness, swearing, and other profaneness; the greater oppressing the less, and the less defrauding and wronging the greater; no sensible and notable work of conversion almost to be seen or heard of amongst us; the Lord absenting himself from His ordinances. O that He would dwell in His house, and fill it with a cloud of His glory!

What vile uncleanness and wantonness! What shameful drunkenness and excess! And some are so far from mourning

for others' guiltiness of this sin, that they glory in making others guilty of it, and count it a pastime to make others drunk. And this is a far greater sin than drunkenness itself; for these men, while they make beasts of their companions, make devils of themselves, becoming tempters and provokers to sin. If any such be here, either tremble at the *wo* that the prophet Habakkuk (chap. ii.) denounceth, or confess that you believe not the scriptures: *Wo to him that gives his neighbour drink, and puts the bottle to him to make him drunken. The cup of the Lord's right hand shall be turned to thee:* it is full of heavy vengeance. There is a cup, if you like it, to pay you home the cups you give to others.

Again: How is the land filled with oaths and cursings! How are your streets, and almost all companies where a man can come, defiled, partly with tearing the precious name of God, partly with calling on the devil!

There would be no end of reckoning up all particulars; sabbath-breaking, fraud and covetousness, pride and malice, and envyings one of another, and the rest. But the sum is this, a universal want of the fear of God and His law.

And the cause of this is, in a great part, ignorance of God and of His law. And truly it is wonderful, under so much light and such plentiful preaching, to find so much darkness, not only in the skirts and remote places, but even in the prime parts of this land. Multitudes there are that are strangers to the very principles and fundamentals of that religion which they profess; and they that have knowledge are found abusing it, and sinning against it, continuing in profaneness. And without this true religion, it is as impossible to have renewed hearts and lives, as to have a house without a foundation, or, as we say, a castle in the air. And this atheism and ignorance amongst people is in a great part to be imputed to the corruption and sloth of ministers. Would to God there were not many congregations, not altogether destitute, but such as are freezing under a cold and lifeless ministry!

You see, then, we want not causes of mourning and humili-

ation, on all hands; but our want is inward, of that due disposition for it, *softness of heart*, and that *love to God* which should melt and mollify the heart. Let us then stir up ourselves and one another, to this godly sorrow for the sins of the land. There is need of *rivers of tears* for these heaps of sin: as they tell of Hercules' letting in a river to that monstrous stable of Augeus, that could not otherwise have been cleansed in the time allotted him.

And truly, as the duty lies upon all the faithful, the ministers of the word ought to be most eminent in it, the chief mourners, the precentors, to take up the tune of these themes. Joel ii. 17. And all that wish the good of church and kingdom ought to bear a part in them, according to their measure. Have we not much need to entreat reconcilement with God, that He prove not our enemy? Yes, surely, and were we reconciled with Him, we should have little need to fear the power of man.

Now, they that would be profitable mourners for others' sins, by all means, must have these two conditions I mentioned; to be careful observers of the law themselves, and to mourn for their own failing and breaking of it. Now, to the observing of the law it is absolutely needful, (1.) To know and understand it, and that not only in the letter and surface, but according to the spiritual sense and meaning of it. For without this knowledge, a man may light upon some duty by guess, as it were in the dark, but observe the law he cannot. They are not alone reprovable who glory in their own sins, and make sport of the sins of others, but they mistake it much who think it enough to consider their own with grief, and judge the sins of others an impertinency for them to think on. As they mourn not aright for others, who begin not at themselves, so, they mourn never aright for themselves, who end in themselves. He who here thus weeps for others, made his bed to swim with those rivers for his own sin. Psal. vi. 6. (2.) As a man must know this law, so he must be inwardly convinced and persuaded of the divinity of it, that it is God's law. (3.) He must have a deep apprehension of the majesty and autho-

rity of the Lawgiver to work reverence, and of His goodness to beget love; and the due mixture of these two will both strongly command and sweeten obedience to His commandments. And this obedience, though it be not an absolute and perfect fulfilling of any one of the commandments, yet, it has a respect to them all, as this Psalm hath it, (ver. 6,) which is, so to speak, an imperfect kind of perfection. And from this respect to the law, which is the observing of it, will flow that other condition, of grieving when we break it.

And besides all other things that should make a Christian's own sin grievous to him, there is one thing cannot but move him much, the consideration of the sorrow and sufferings of Christ. To view the bleedings of the Lord Jesus, cannot but pierce a believing soul, and make it say, Did my Redeemer shed His blood for my sins, and shall not I myself shed tears for them? I know the natural constitution of some denies them tears; but if it do so to any, make up that want with a sense of inward grief, and it is well enough. The eye of God can discern that as well as the other. But truly, where men have tears for lighter causes, for all other causes are lighter, and none for this, they feel not yet the weight of sin; except that want be through the deepness of sorrow, which sometimes will stop the current of tears, though it used to run at other times: as they say, *Curæ leves loquuntur, ingentes stupent.* But this is a rare and a happy impediment.

And to answer another doubt: If you find sometimes worldly griefs stir you more violently, yet let this godly sorrow affect you more constantly, that it may have the advantage in continuance, if it fall short in the degree.

But as this grief must begin at home, as they say of charity, it must not be so selfish as to rest there. And truly, where it comes in that order, it may be some way a stronger evidence of sincerity, to mourn for others' sins, than to mourn for our own, for there seems to be more of God in it, because there is less in it of ourselves, and of our own particular interest.

Now, you will possibly think it but an unpleasant duty that

you have heard urged all this while; but look forward, and consider the issue of it. That which Christ speaks in particular to his disciples, is generally true of all Christians: *Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice; ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned* (or made) *into joy.* John xvi. 20. The water of those tears shall be turned into wine of consolation. The traffic of these *rivers* is gainful; they export grief, and import joy. When these tears are called *seed*, the harvest-crop is called *joy.* Psal. cxxvi. 5. *They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.* They are here called *rivers,* and they are answered with a river, for which they shall in the end be perfectly exchanged. Psal. lxxxvi. 8. *Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures.* And Rev. vii. 17. *The Lamb shall feed them, and lead them unto living fountains of waters.* Here they run down the eyes, and water the cheeks, and there you read that God shall wipe them away from their eyes. Who would not be content to weep, to have God wipe away their tears with His own hand? Be ambitious, then, to be found amongst the mourners in Sion; and when ye remove from this valley of tears, God shall at once fully wipe away all the stain of sin from your souls, and all tears for it from your eyes. And as He shall wipe away the tears with the one hand, He will set the crown upon your heads with the other.

SERMON VIII.

[Preached after the Administration of the Lord's Supper.]

PREFACE.

Blessed *are they that dwell in Thy House,* saith the Psalmist; and he adds this reason, *They will be still praising Thee.* There is indeed always in God's house, both fit oppor-

tunity and plentiful matter of His praises. But the greater number of those that frequent His house, do not *dwell* in it; their delight and affection is not there. Therefore they cannot praise Him: they come in as strangers, and have no skill in the songs of praise. Yea, and the very children of the family, who worship in spirit and in truth, find their instruments (their hearts) very often quite out of tune for praises, and sometimes most of all when praises are requisite. They find still such abundant cause of complaint in themselves, weighing down their spirits, that they can hardly at all wind them up to magnify that God whose mercy is far more abundant. If we would take a reflex view, and look back upon our carriage this day in the presence of our God, who is there among us, who would not find much work for sad thoughts! Would not one find that he had a hard and stony heart, another, a light, inconstant, wandering heart to complain of, a third, an unbelieving heart, and some, all of these? And they (if such there be) who have both deeply sorrowed, and been largely comforted, will possibly, for all that, upon former sad experience, be full of fears and jealousies, that this sweet temper will not be of long continuance; that before long, the world, or some lust, will find, or make a way to creep in, and banish those heavenly thoughts, and trouble that peace and joy which accompanies them. Yet, notwithstanding all these causes of grief or fear, our causes of praise are both more and greater. And it is no reason that the sense of our own evil should prejudge that acknowledgment of God's goodness; yea, rather it should stir us up to extol it so much the more. Cease not to bemoan the evils of your own hearts; but withal forget not to magnify the riches of His grace, who hath given Himself for you, and to you. These two will not hinder one another, but the due intermixture of them will make a very good harmony. And the fruit of them will be this, you shall have still more cause to praise, and less to complain. When the Lord shall find you humble acknowledgers of His grace, He will delight to bestow more grace upon you, and will subdue those iniquities

for you, which you cannot. And though He is pleased to do it but gradually, by little and little, yet, in the end, the conquest shall be full; and then, He who is *the author and the finisher of your faith*, though it is His own work, yet, because it is done in you, He shall account the victory yours, as obtained by you, and give you, as conquerors, the crown of glory. *To him that overcometh*, saith he, *will I give to sit with me in my throne*. Rev. iii. 21.

There is nothing here, but from free grace. The courage and strength to fight in this spiritual warfare, the victory by fighting, and the crown by victory, flow all from that fountain. *In all these things, we are more than conquerors*, saith the Apostle—but how?—*through Him that loved us*. Therefore, if we desire to be such, let us humble ourselves before the throne of grace, entreating both for grace and glory in the name of Christ our Mediator.

Cant. i. 3.

Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee.

The natural workings and desires of things are agreeable to their being. The beasts, according to their sensitive life, seek those things that tend to the good and preservation of that life, and affect nothing higher than those, and they are satisfied. Man (except such men as are in the lowest stage, and border upon the beasts) finds nature, even corrupt nature, raising him to higher desires and designs. And yet, of the best of them, the Apostle's maxim holds true, *They that are after the flesh, mind the things of the flesh;* and yet, he subjoins the excellency of some men beyond the best naturalist, *They that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit*. Rom. viii. 5. They cannot be confined to things natural, but are strongly moved towards spiritual blessings, and towards Christ the sum of them. And having once tasted of his sweetness, they can

say, *Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth.*

They that are elevated to a supernatural being, can admit nothing into competition with His love; and this it is that lies under these words, *Because of the savour of thy good ointments,* &c.

Numbers have promiscuously been his guests at this time, and the greatest number think they came to good purpose. But know, that you are so far from partaking of Christ in the sacrament, that you have not so much as smelt his perfumes, if you be not strongly taken with his love. Great are the praises, and many the duties you owe Him for so rich favours; and therefore, shew your good will, and endeavour some payment. But know, that none of them are current, except they be stamped with *love.* If you love not, you do nothing: all your labours and services without it, are as so many ciphers, they amount to just nothing. And with it, the meanest of them will find acceptance.

You have briefly in the words, *Christ's loveliness* and *the Christian's love,* the former the cause of the latter; both couched under borrowed terms, according to the whole strain of this allegorical song, on which the true experimental knowledge of this Divine love is the best commentary.

In all love three things are necessary: (1.) Some goodness in the object, either true and real, or apparent and seeming to be so: for the soul, be it never so evil, can affect nothing but what it takes some way to be good. (2.) There must be a knowledge of that goodness; for the most excellent things, if altogether unknown, affect not. (3.) There must be a suitableness or agreement of that good thing with the nature of those who should affect it; otherwise, indeed, how good soever it is, it is not good to them.

Now all these we have clearly in this love. I. The goodness, the excellency of Christ, expressed by *precious ointments.* II. The manifestation and making of it known, signified by *the pouring forth of His name.* III. His fitness and con-

gruity with them who are here mentioned under this denomination, *virgins;* such as have the senses of their souls not stopped with the pollutions of the world, but pure and active, and therefore, as the Apostle speaks, Heb. v. 14, *exercised to discern good and evil.* These three requisites thus happily met, must needs produce love: *Therefore the virgins love thee.*

I. The excellency of the object: *Because of the savour of thy good ointments.* How true is the Apostle's word, when he calls Christ the believer's *All things!* And that radical grace of faith, because it apprehends Christ, hath a kind of universality; and it is reasonable too, it alone being to the soul what all the five senses are to the body. It is the eye, and the mouth; a wonderful eye, it *sees Him who is invisible,* Heb. xi. 27; the mouth, it *tastes that the Lord is gracious.* 1 Pet. ii. 3. Yea, take these two both together in one place, Psal. xxxiv. 8, *O! taste, and see that the Lord is good.* It is the soul's ear; for what else is meant, when it is said, *He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear?* And was it not that *touch* which Christ took special notice of, and with good reason distinguished it from the common touch of the multitude that was crowding about him? That *touch* alone draws virtue from him? *Some one hath touched me, for there is virtue gone out of me.* And lastly, as it is all those other senses, and Christ is its object in reference to them all, so here, in its *smelling,* it finds the savour of his fragrant graces, and by that works love: *Because of the savour of thy precious ointments.*

What strange odds is there betwixt the opinion of Christ's Spouse, and that of the world who know him not! They wonder what she sees in him desirable: she wonders that they are not all ravished with his excellencies. They prefer the basest vanities in the world before him: she finds the choicest and richest things in the world too mean to resemble the smallest part of his worth. See in this *Song,* how busily and skilfully she goes to all the creatures, and crops the rarest pieces in nature and art to set forth her well-beloved, and seems to find them all too poor for her purpose. One while,

she extols him above all things beautiful and pleasant to the eye; another while, above things delectable to the taste, as in the former verse, *Thy loves are better than wine;* and here she prefers the perfume of his graces to the most precious ointments.

When a natural eye looks upon the sacrament, to wit, of the Lord's Supper, it finds a bare and mean kind of ceremony. Take heed there be not many of you that come to it, and partake of it with others, who prize it little, have but low conceits of it, and do indeed find as little in it as you look for. But oh, what precious consolation and grace doth a believer meet with at this banquet! How richly is the table furnished to his eye! What plentiful varieties employ his hand and taste, what abundance of rare dainties! Yet, there is nothing but One here; but that One is all things to the believing soul. It finds *his* love is sweeter than the richest wine to the taste, or best odours to the smell; and that delightful word of his, *Thy sins are forgiven thee,* is the only music to a distressed conscience.

Thy good ointments. The holy ointment of the sanctuary, under the Law, was composed according to God's own prescription. See Exod. xxx. 25. And they were straightly forbid to imitate it, or make any like it, to signify the singular holiness, the matchless worth of the anointing *oil of gladness,* wherewith our high priest, the Lord Jesus, was *anointed above his fellows.* And in this he is incomparable, that his ointment he hath not from without. It was his own Divine nature that perfumed his manhood with these precious ointments. God and the Spirit of the Lord are said to have anointed him. Psal. xlv. 7. *Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness; therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.* And Isa. lxi. 1. *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek.* But know, that that Spirit and the Father are one in essence with the eternal Son. In that mystical song much like to this, the xlvth

Psalm, it is said, (ver. 8) *his garments smell of myrrh and aloes and cassia*, [as he comes forth] *out of* [his] *ivory palaces.* When he came down from his glorious court above, to dwell among men, he apparelled himself like them: he was clothed with human flesh. But yet, that vesture was so transcendently enriched with all graces, as with costly perfumes, that men might easily know there was more under them than a mere man. Yea, even in that low estate, did such beams of his glory shine through, that all whose eyes were open, did clearly behold them, and know him to be no less than the only begotten Son of God, by this, that he was so *full of grace and truth.* John i. 14. And these are, in a word, the precious ointments whose delightful smell is here commended.

Now, to enumerate and describe these graces, what tongue of men, yea, or of angels were sufficient? What other is the main subject of the whole Scriptures? What mean all the figures and ceremonies of the Law, the costly furniture and ornaments of the Temple, the rich vestments of the High Priest, that fine linen, that silk and gold, those gems and precious stones? Was any one of them, were they all, any other than shadows and dim resemblances of the matchless perfections of Jesus Christ? It is strange, that Christians have so low conceits of their high Redeemer! What is the Gospel, but a more clear and plentiful pouring forth of those ointments? What was the great labour and business of the holy Apostles, but the diffusing of Christ's graces through the world? *I determined to know nothing among you, save Christ and him crucified,* says St. Paul to his Corinthians. What are that other sacrament and this, but coverts under which Christ conveys himself and his graces to the believing soul, while the profane and slight-hearted receivers are sent away with empty elements? Thus you see how ample a subject these graces are in the general. And truly, the consideration of any one particular of them, might be the employment of many hours. Would you hear of the *wisdom* of Christ? Look what the Apostle says of it, Col. ii. 3, *In*

Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Not some drops of wisdom, no, nor streams, but a fountain. Not one treasure, but treasures, many treasures, yea, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; yet not obvious to every eye, but, as treasures are, *hid.* The children of wisdom, who are the world's fools, have some knowledge of this his wisdom, and draw from it for their own use; but to sound the depth of it, who can be able!

No less admirable is his *holiness.* He is both the immaculate Lamb, and the undefiled Sacrifice. *Such a high priest became us.* Heb. vii. 26. Became *us!* Yes, *holy, harmless and undefiled:* the more we were defiled with sin, the more stood we in need of an undefiled and spotless High Priest. It was as expedient that he should be unlike us in that, as that he should be like us in all other things. Therefore, as for the Legal priesthood there was a holy consecrating oil, so, this immortal High Priest was anointed with most entire and complete holiness. And this perfect holiness of his, is set forth as *myrrh,* the best ointments and spices—*myrrh* which is of a virtue preservative from corruption. He was not only of excellent smell, while he lived among men, but this myrrh did likewise preserve and exempt him from contracting any corruption or pollution, by the bad air of sinful company; so that he conversed with sinners, that he might convert them, without any danger of infection.

And as he was thus extraordinarily anointed with the spirit of wisdom and holiness, so, likewise with the spirit of *meekness;* therefore He is called *The Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world.* His *voice was not heard in the streets.* Matt. xii. 19. And take in that other grace which he himself mentions together with his meekness, as being near in nature to it, *humility: Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.* Matt. xi. 29. Indeed, humility is an odoriferous grace: it is a *gracing* grace, it adds a kind of sweetness and lustre to all other graces: yea, it serves singularly as a character for the trial of the truth of all other graces. As balsam, which

is the chief of precious ointments, used to be tried; that is the truest and best, which, put into any liquor, goes to the bottom; that but slight which swims above; so, those graces are most upright that are accompanied with most humility. And that this may be out of doubt, you know that Jesus Christ, of whom we now speak, as he had most grace, so was he most exemplary in humility. And certainly the sweet smell of this *good ointment* did *fill the whole house*, when he washed his disciples' feet; as is said of the ointment that Mary poured upon his feet, in the foregoing chapter. John xii. 3.

Amongst many other of his gracious qualities that might be mentioned, there is one we cannot but take particular notice of, his *love;* the rather, because the fragrant smell of his graces is here said to beget love. Now, you know that one of the strongest attractives of *love*, is *love*. Ἔρως ἔρωτα τίκτει: *Magnes amoris amor*. What made him empty himself of his glory, as the Apostle speaks, but because he was full of love? What made him take on the form of a servant, suffer heat, and cold, and hunger, and poverty, but love? What other was it made him digest the persecutions, revilings, and the contradiction of sinners, but love? But the great wonder of his love is this, he *died* to become our life. *Who hath loved me, and given himself for me*, says the great Apostle St. Paul. Gal. ii. 20. And *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us*, says the beloved Apostle St. John. 1 John iii. 16. Was it the nails that held him fast to the cross, when they tauntingly bid him come down? No; it was his *love*, that was stronger than death. But all this was nothing to the angry countenance of his Father, nor would he ever have ventured upon that, if infinite love had not persuaded him. No wonder if the Apostle call it a love that passeth knowledge. *That you may know*, saith he, *the love of Christ which passeth knowledge*. Eph. iii. 19. Know it we may, and should, but we must know withal, that we cannot know it fully. And this is our comfort, that it is greater than we can comprehend; for if it were not so, it would be less than we

stand in need of. So much of his love we may understand, as may abundantly inflame our hearts with love to him. For this purpose hath he revealed it, and made His *name like an ointment poured out.* And that is the second thing.

II. *His name.* That is, the report and manifestation of his excellencies. And if you will take it properly of his name, *Jesus*, and *Christ*, or the *Messiah*, it is true of them, for they are significative of these excellencies. Ask an afflicted conscience if *Jesus*, that is, *a Saviour*, be not a precious word, that hath a sovereign value, both a refreshing smell and a healing virtue. The hammer of the Law may break a stony heart in pieces, but it is only the blood of Jesus that can soften it. And where it is effectually poured, either upon a wounded soul, it heals it; or upon a hard heart, it mollifies it. For that other name, *Christ*, well may it be called *an ointment poured out*, for it signifies his *anointing.* And that the sweet savour of this name may affect, read but that one passage, Isa. lxi. 1. *The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek*, &c. What inestimable riches of consolation are there in each of those effects to which Christ was anointed! And yet we find not a word among them all for a proud, stiff-necked sinner. Here are *good tidings*, but it is to *the meek;* comfortable *binding up*, but it is for the *broken-hearted; liberty*, but it is for *captives* and *prisoners* groaning under their chains, and desirous to be delivered: not for such as delight in their bondage. There is *oil of joy* and *garments of praise*, but they are provided for *mourning, dejected spirits* that need them; not for the impenitent. On the contrary, there is a terrible word interjected in the midst of these promises, *The day of vengeance of our God;* and that is the portion of Christ's enemies, and such are all incorrigible sinners.

Thus it is, at the same banquet from which you come, one may be filled with spiritual joy, and the very person that sits next may be filled with a secret curse, and return more miserable than he came. But let the disconsolate, lamenting sinner

lift up his head, and behold Christ, the Son of God, anointed a *prophet*, to preach salvation and liberty to such; a *priest*, to purchase it, and a *king*, to give it.

Now, the *pouring out* of his name is divers. Before the coming of the Messiah his name was poured out in prophecies and promises, in types and legal ceremonies; but more fully when the *Word was made flesh.* Then angels, and holy men, yea, and women, spake clearly of him. What was his Father's voice at his baptism, the Holy Ghost's descending; what was his own preaching, and miracles, and conversation, but all the pouring forth of his precious name? And in his sufferings and death, what think you? Was not his name then poured forth, yea, his blood with it? Yes, truly, being extended on the cross, and his body pierced in divers places, his precious ointments were shed abroad towards all the quarters of the world; their smell reached both heaven and the visible earth. God the Father, as He was said to do in Noah's sacrifice, did much more smell in his sacrifice a savour of rest, appeasing his wrath; and all believers a savour of peace, a quieting of their consciences. And as aromatic spices, when they are pounded out and beaten, send forth their sweet smells most liberally, so, in these his sufferings, did the *obedience*, *patience*, and *love*, and all the *graces*, and the *name* of our Saviour, most clearly manifest themselves to the world. After he was dead, they embalmed his body, but they knew not that his own virtue would do more than all the ointments and spices in the world could do, not only by preserving his body from corruption, but by raising it the third day. And truly, after his resurrection, his own disciples knew his name better than ever before; and yet more fully after his ascension, when the Holy Ghost came down upon them, which was poured from Heaven on them for this very end, that they might pour forth Christ's name to the ends of the earth. Acts ii. 8. And they did so, carrying this precious *treasure in earthen vessels*, as that elect vessel St. Paul speaks, 1 Cor. iv. 7. And ever since, God hath continued the pouring forth of his name, by the ministry

and preaching of the Gospel. It is true there are too many of those that are employed in this work, who seek themselves, and their own ends, rather than His glory whom they preach. And they that are more upright, the very best of them are sinful men. But how mean and unworthy soever they be, despise not the Gospel. Let the sweet name which they pour forth, prevail for itself, that so you may reverence and love it, if you would have *salvation* by it; and *there is no other name under heaven* by which *that* can be obtained.

As this name is poured forth in the *gospel preached*, so, in the *sacraments* annexed to it; and particularly in this, when the bread is broken, and the wine poured out. And was not this the earnest desire of the receivers of it this day,—it should have been,—to have our share in it, for the refreshment and curing of our souls? Nor shall any that came thus be disappointed. And if not immediately, yet most certainly, and that in due time, they shall find the sweet fruits of it.

You have heard many ways how the name of Christ is poured out, yet there is one more, without which all the rest are ineffectual; it is this, the secret and powerful working of the Spirit of God in the soul. The ordinances and means of salvation do indeed pour forth the name of Christ round about a man, but till the Spirit concur with them, not one drop falls within the soul. And is he not so much the more miserable, who hears much of Christ, and partakes nothing of him? Yes, surely. A man may have much common knowledge of Christ, and may understand well, yea, may preach well, concerning his worth and graces, and yet not *love* Him. But there is a particular knowledge of Him by the infusion of the Spirit, and where the smallest measure of this is, it presently wins the affection. There is *a shedding abroad of the love of God in our hearts*, that the Apostle speaks of, Rom. v. 5; and this draws us after Him; for our love to God is nothing else but the reflection of His love to us. So, then, though many hear of Christ, yet because there are but few that have this special knowledge of him; therefore it is that so few do truly esteem

him and love him; and they are such as are here called Virgins: and that is the third thing.

III. The correspondence in the character of those who love Christ: *The Virgins.* Similitude and conformity of nature begets friendship: pure affections delight in a pure object, and it makes them such. For the truth is, Christ doth not find men naturally suitable to himself, but as he took on our nature, so he washeth away the sinfulness of our nature, which he took not on, and makes us that way conformable to his nature. And they who are so changed, though they were formerly lovers of sin, yet, by conversion, which is called regeneration, they are born again, and so become not only chaste, but even *virgins*, spiritually. For by *virgins*, here, are not meant such as Romish votaries fancy them to be: no, this virginity may well consist with any lawful state of life.

These virgins are such as be truly holy and pure in heart and life, who, though they are not perfectly free from all sin, yet have affection to no sin. These are singularly delighted with the smell of Christ's name and graces, while the voluptuous person, and the profane worldling, dislike and despise it! *Balsama sic suibus, sic male nardus olent.* The virgins, they bestow their affection whole and entire upon Christ.

How grossly do you delude yourselves, who make your hearts dens of pride, filthy lust, malice and envy, and thousands of vanities, and yet think to find a corner in them to lodge Christ too! Truly, you would both straiten him in room, and give him very bad neighbours. No; they that think not a whole heart too little for him, shall never enjoy him.

The Virgins love thee.] Grace destroys not the natural passions of the soul, but corrects them only, by destroying their corruption, and so they become not merely not contrary to grace, but are made the subject and seat of grace. This of love, which is the chief of them, we see, it abolisheth not, but rectifies it, recalling it to its due object, and turning it into the right channel, by which it may empty itself into the ocean of goodness.

And this love may well consist with the purity of virgins; yea, it is this love that purifies and makes them such. *The Virgins love*—But whom? *Thee.* And it is as reasonable a love as it is pure; *Therefore they love Thee,* because thou hast made them in some measure apprehensive of thy worth, which commands the love of all that know it; not a cold and indifferent affection, but a superlative, ardent love, far overtopping all their other desires. And with good reason, since Christ doth infinitely, and beyond all comparison, surpass all other things desirable. Ask your own hearts, if you love Christ thus; for if not thus, you love him not at all. The Apostle St. Paul's love was of this size. Phil. iii. 7, 8. *But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ; yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ.* This love will not only undergo difficulties and sufferings for Christ without either repining or fainting, but it will even be glad to meet with them, as opportunity is, to exercise and testify itself. Hard things will seem most easy for his sake, and bitter things exceeding sweet. In a word, to him that loves, scarce any thing is impossible. Love is the leading passion of the soul: all the rest conform themselves to it, *desire,* and *hope,* and *fear,* and *joy,* and *sorrow.*

If, then, you love Christ, the desires and breathings of your soul after him are strong and earnest. If he withdraw himself, or appear angry, if either you see him not, or see him look discontented, your grief will be so deep that it cannot be allayed by any worldly employments. Yet, upon some former tokens of his love, which is known to be unchangeable, hope will uphold the soul, till the beams of his grace scatter the cloud, and break through. Though our *Joseph* seem strange, and speak roughly for awhile, he cannot long refrain discovering his affection.

Again, love you him, unspeakable will be your joy when he smiles upon you. As great will be your delight in possession,

as your desire is in pursuit; and while you have his presence, it will be too hard a task for any affliction to dismay you. Have you indeed heard Christ speak comfortably to you this day at his holy table? How will this enable the soul, and arm it against dangers and distracting, distrustful fears! *Perfect love casteth out fear*, saith St. John (1 John iv. 18): that is, all base and servile fear; but there is one fear that is in no heart but where love begets it—fear to offend. You know how wary and loth men are naturally to displease those they love; therefore it is, that love to Christ, and a careful observing of his commandments, are inseparable companions. Yea, love itself is the *fulfilling of the law*, for it gives up the heart to God, and consequently the whole man. Then there is no return of duty which your receiving of Christ calls for (and what doth it not call for?)—there is none, I say, but is comprised under this one of *love*. Do you owe him praises? Yes, surely. Then *love him;* that will stir you up to praise him. You never knew, but where much love was in the heart, it made the tongue ready and active upon all occasions to praise the party loved. Love will entertain small courtesies with great thanks; much more where the benefit so far exceeds all possible thankfulness. Ought you to serve and obey him? Doubtless: he hath for that purpose redeemed you with his precious blood. And truly there is no obedience or service so full and so cheerful as that which flows from love. Should you study conformity to Christ, and labour to be like him? Yes, for this is to walk worthy of Christ. Then there is nothing assimilates so much as love. Men delight in their society whom they love, and by their society they do insensibly contract their customs, and become like them. These Virgins who love Christ for his graces, they love to converse with him; and by conversing with him, they receive of his graces, and have a smell of his perfumes. Not only do they, by the smell of his garments, or such imposed rites, obtain the blessing, but they likewise smell like him by the participation of sanctifying grace, of his wisdom and holiness, in a pure and godly con-

versation, abstaining from the impure lusts and pollutions of the world; so likewise of his meekness and humility. Never think that one and the same soul can have much pride and much of Christ. Ever, the more grace a man hath, the more sense hath he likewise of his own unworthiness, and God's free mercy, and, consequently, the more humility.

If you love Christ, you cannot choose but be like him in love to your brethren. This is expressly compared, by the Psalmist, to the *precious ointment poured upon Aaron's head, that ran down to the very skirts of his garments.* Psal. cxxxiii. 2. Our Head and High Priest, the Lord Jesus, hath incomparably testified his love to believers, whom he is pleased to call his *brethren.* They are far from equalling him, either in love to him, or in love one to another, but they do imitate him in both. This is his great commandment, *that we love one another, even as he loved us,* which is expressed both as a strong motive and a high example. It is not possible that a spirit of malice and implacable hatred can consist with the love of Christ.

Finally, Should you be ready to suffer for Christ? Yes. Then love is that which will enable you; and if you were inflamed with this fire, then, though burned for him, that fire would only consume your dross, and be soon extinguished; but this would endure for ever.

By these and the like evidences, try whether you indeed love the Lord Jesus Christ. And by these fruits, you who profess to love him, testify the sincerity of your love; and be assured, that if you be now found amongst these Virgins that love him, you shall one day be of the number of those Virgins that are spoken of, Rev. xiv. 3, 4, who sing a new song before the throne of God.

If you hate the defilements of the world, and be not polluted with inordinate affection to the creature, it shall never repent you to have made choice of Christ. He shall fill your hearts with peace and joy in believing. When you come to his house and table, he shall send you home with joy and sweet consola-

tion, such as you would not exchange for crowns and sceptres. And after some few of these running banquets here below, you shall enter into the great marriage-supper of the Lamb, where faith shall end in sight, and hope in possession, and love continue in perpetual and full enjoyment; where you shall be never weary, but for ever happy in beholding the face of the Blessed Trinity: to whom be glory. Amen.

SERMON IX.

PREFACE.

How true is that word of our Saviour, who is truth itself, *Without me, ye can do nothing:*—severed from me, as that branch that is not in me. They who are altogether out of Christ in spiritual exercises, do nothing at all. It is true they may pray and hear the word, yea, and preach it too, and yet in so doing they do nothing in effect. They have the matter of good actions, but it is the internal form gives being to things. They are but a number of empty words and a dead service to a living God; for all our outward performances and worship of the body are nothing but the body of worship, and therefore nothing but a carcase, except the Lord Jesus, by his Spirit, breathe upon it the breath of life. Yea, the worshipper himself is spiritually dead, till he receive life from Jesus, and be quickened by his Spirit. If this be true, then it will follow necessarily, that where numbers are met together, as here, pretending to serve and worship God, yet He hath very few that do so indeed, the greatest part being out of Christ; and such being without him, they can do nothing in his service.

Rom. viii. 7.

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

The ordinary workings and actions of creatures are suitable to their nature, as the ascending of light things, and the moving of heavy things downwards; so the vital and sensitive actions of things that have life and sense. The reasonable creature, it is true, hath more liberty in its actions, freely choosing one thing and rejecting another; yet, it cannot be denied, that in the acting of that liberty, their choice and refusal follow the sway of their nature and condition. As the angels and glorified souls, their nature being perfectly holy, and unalterably such, they cannot sin, they can delight in nothing but in obeying and praising that God in the enjoyment of whom their happiness consisteth, still ravished in beholding His face. The saints, again, that have not yet reached that home, and are but on their journey, they are not fully defecated and refined from the dross of sin; there are in them two parties, *natural corruption*, and *supernatural grace;* and these keep a struggling within them. But the younger shall supplant the elder; grace shall in the end overcome; and in the meanwhile, though it be not free from mixture, yet it is predominant. The main bent of a renewed man is, obedience and holiness; and any action of that kind he rejoices in; but the sin that escapes him, he cannot look upon but with regret and discontent. But alas! they that be so minded are very thin sown in the world. Even in God's peculiar fields, where the labourage of the gospel is, and the outward profession of true religion unanimously received, yet the number of true converts, spiritual-minded persons, is very small; the greatest part acting sin with delight, and taking pleasure in unrighteousness, living in disobedience to God, as in their proper element; and the reason is, the contrariety of their nature to our holy Lord. *The carnal mind is enmity against God.*

The mind, φρόνημα. Some render it the *prudence*, or *wisdom* of the flesh. Here you have it, *the carnal mind*. But the word signifies, indeed, an act of the mind, rather than either the faculty itself, or the habit of prudence in it, so as it discovers what is the frame of both these, the *minding*; as it is used, ver. 5, conformably to that of Moses, Gen. vi. *Every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil continually*. The word, indeed, signifies the *wise thoughts*. So, then, take the full latitude of it thus: *The carnal mind*, in its best and wisest thoughts, is direct *enmity against God*.

Carnal [τῆς σαρκός.] What is meant by the *flesh* here? It is the whole *corrupt nature* of man; and *that* we may know by its opposition to the *Spirit:* not to the spirit or soul of a man, for so it hath no *thoughts* nor *minding*, these being proper to the soul, but opposed to the Spirit of God.

Now, the corruption of nature is called the *flesh*, not without very good reason, not only to signify the baseness of it (the flesh being the more ignoble and meaner part of a man), but because the greatest part of the sins of men's lives are about sensitive objects and things, that concern the flesh or the body. It lets in temptation of sin to the soul by the doors of the senses, and it gives the last perfection or accomplishment to sin, by the external acting of it. The very first sin that brought in death and misery with it upon mankind, the pleasures of the *eye* and of the *taste*, were sharers in the guiltiness of it.

The carnal mind.] Man, in regard of his composition, is, as it were, the tie and band of Heaven and earth: they meet and are married in him. A body he has taken out of the dust, but a soul is breathed into him from Heaven, from the *Father of Spirits:* a house of clay, but a guest of most noble extraction. But the pity is, it hath forgot its original, and is so drowned in flesh, that it deserves no other than to go under the name of flesh. It is become the slave and drudge of the body, and, like the Israelites in Egypt, made perpetually to moil in clay. What is all your merchandise, your trades, and manufactures,

your tillage and husbandry, but all for the body, in its behalf, for food and raiment? In all these, the mind must be careful and thoughtful; and yet properly they reach it not, for itself hath no interest in them. It is true, the necessity of the body requires much of these things, and superfluous custom far more; but it is lamentable that men force their soul to forget itself and its proper business, to attend to these things only, and be busy in them. They spend all their time, and their choicest pains, upon perishing things, and, which is worse, engage their affections to them. They *mind earthly things, whose end is destruction.* Phil. iii. 18:—the same word is here, φρονημα τῆς σαρκος.

Will you consider seriously, that your souls run the hazard of perishing, because you consider not their spiritual nature? When that earthly tabernacle of yours shall fall to the ground (and ere long it must), your souls must then enter eternity; and though you had as large a share of earthly things as your earthly hearts now would wish, they will all lose their use in that moment. They are not a proper good for the soul at any time, and least at that time. If you keep it, all your life long, busy about the interest and benefit of the flesh, the body, how poor will it be when they part, having provided nothing at all for itself, but the guiltiness of a sinful life, which will sink it into that bottomless pit! Be forewarned, then: *For to be carnally minded is death.* Ver. 6, preceding the text.

The carnal mind.] Now, as sin hath debased and degenerated the soul of man, making it carnal, so, the Son of God, by taking on our nature, hath sublimated it again, and made it spiritual. The souls that receive him are spiritualized; yea, as sin made the soul carnal, grace makes the very body to become spiritual, making it partaker and co-worker in spiritual things together with the soul, in doing and suffering, and participant of the hopes, too, of an everlasting reward. This is the main Christian character our Apostle gives here, that they are *spiritually minded,* and that their actions suit their minds: *They walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.* Whereas

before, with the rest of the world, they were eager in the pursuit of honours, and profits, and worldly pleasures, the new stream of their desires runs in another channel. They seek after honour, and are very ambitious of it; but it is such honour the Apostle speaks of in this Epistle, ch. ii. ver. 7. *By patient continuance in well doing they seek for glory, and honour, and immortality.* Their mind is upon profit and gain; but it is with the same Apostle, Phil. iii. 8, that they *may win Christ*, and they account all other things *loss* in comparison. And their desires are after pleasure too, but not *carnal pleasures;* these are both base, and of short continuance, but the pleasures they aim at, are those that are *at God's right hand, and for evermore*, Psal. xvi. 11; and that *path of life* which the Psalmist there speaks of, that way of holiness which leads thither, is their delight. Spiritual exercises they go to, not as their task only, but more as their joy and refreshment. And this change the Spirit of God works in the soul, making it, yea, and the body wherein it dwells, of carnal, to become spiritual: as fire, to which the Holy Ghost is compared, refines sand and ashes, and makes of them the purest glass, which is so neat and transparent.

Enmity against God.] Sin hath not only made us unlike God, by defacing His beautiful image in us; not only strangers, by making us wander far off from Him, but *enemies;* nor enemies only, but *enmity* in the abstract; for that is emphatical, *The carnal mind is enmity*, nothing else but enmity.

Now, this enmity is described in the latter clause of the text, by an antipathy, so to call it, or noncompliance with the law of God: *It is not subject to the Law of God, neither can it be*, to wit, while it remains such. There is an absolute impossibility in it, to suit with the Law of God, and consequently with God himself. The reason lies in their opposite qualities. God is *spiritual* and *holy*, and so is the Law, as our Apostle hath it in the preceding chapter; and the opposition he there makes betwixt his unregenerate part and the Law, is wholly true of the unregenerate man. *The Law is holy*, says he,

ver. 12, and ver. 14, *The Law is spiritual;* to which too he opposes, *But I am carnal, sold under sin.*

Where are now those who so vilify grace and magnify nature? Or, shall I rather say, nullify grace, and deify nature? Here is the best eulogy the Apostle will bestow upon the best of natures, *Enmity against God.* Nay, all the sparkles of virtue and moral goodness in civil men and ancient heathens are no better; besides many other things to be said of the virtues of those philosophers, as ignorance of Christ, by whom alone this enmity is removed.

I should easily confess, nor, I think, can any deny it, that there is, in the very ruins of our nature, some character left of a tendency to God as our chief and only satisfying good, which we may call a kind of love, and when we hear Him spoken of, we find it flutter and stir; and hence men so abhor the imputation of hating God and being His enemies. Yet, this is so smothered under sensuality and flesh, that until we be made spiritual, nothing appears but practical and (as they call it) interpretative enmity.

There is one thing which stains them enough; they were all, as that Father speaks, *animalia gloriæ:* they aimed not, in their study of virtue, at God's glory, but at their own; and is not that quarrel enough, and matter of enmity? Says not He, *My glory I will not give unto another?*

But that is most useful for you, to convince you of that too good conceit which men have of their natural condition. You would take it hardly, the most profane of you all, if any should come to you in particular, and tell you, you are an enemy to God; but I answer, there is none of you, if you believe the Scriptures, but will confess that all men are naturally such, and therefore, except we find in ourselves a notable alteration from the condition of nature, we must take with it, that we are enemies, yea, *enmity* to God. Of strangers, to become acquainted with Him, yea, which is more, of enemies to become friends, is a greater and more remarkable change, than to be incident to a man without any evidence and sign of it. I know

there is very great variety in the way and manner of conversion; and to some, especially if it be in their tender years, grace may be instilled and dropped in, as it were, insensibly. But this I may confidently say, that whatsoever be the way of working it, there will be a wide and apparent difference betwixt friendship with God, and the condition of nature, which is enmity against Him. Do not flatter yourselves. So long as your minds remain carnal, ardent in love to the world, and cold in love to God, *lovers of pleasures more than of God*, (as the Apostle speaks,) you are His enemies, for with Him there is no neutrality. That which they say, taxing it as a weakness in the sex, *Aut amat, aut odit, nihil est tertium*, is in this case necessarily true of all. And this is God's prerogative, that He can judge infallibly of the inside. Those shadows of friendship men use one with another, will not pass with Him. Deceived He cannot be, but men may easily; and alas! too many do deceive themselves in this matter to their own ruin.

We may learn hence, how deep sin goes into our nature, and, consequently, that the cure and remedy of it must go as deep; that all the parts of our bodies and all the powers of our souls are polluted originally, our very *mind* and *conscience*, as the Apostle speaks, for it is immersed in flesh and enslaved to flesh, naturally, and therefore goes under its name. We are become all *flesh;* that is the spring of our mischiefs. We have lost our likeness to our Father, the Father of Spirits, the purest and most spiritual Spirit, till renewed by participation of His Spirit in our flesh.

And it is the error, not only of natural men, but somewhat of the godly too, that in self-reformation they set themselves against actual sin, but they lay not the axe to the root of the tree, this root of bitterness, this our inbred and natural *enmity* against God; and till this be done, the lopping off of some branches will do no good: while the root is in vigour, those will grow again, and possibly, faster than before. Bewail every known act of sin, as much as you can, for the least of them deserves it; but withal, let the consideration of them lead

you into thoughts of this seed of rebellion, the wickedness of our nature, that takes life with us in the womb, and springs and grows up with us, and this will humble us exceedingly and raise our godly sorrow to a higher tide. We find David taketh this course in the fifty-first Psalm: where he is lamenting his particular sin of adultery and murder, it leads him to the sinfulness of his nature, *I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me;* [or, warm me;] which he mentions, not to extenuate and diminish his sin; no, he is there very far from that strain, but adds it as a main aggravation. Indeed, the power of original sin in the regenerate, is laid very low, yet it is not altogether extinct, which they find often to their grief, and this makes them cry out with our Apostle, in the former chapter, *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death!* The converted are already delivered (as he there adds) from the dominion of it, but not from the molestation and trouble of it. Though it is not a quiet and uncontrolled master, as it was before, yet, it is in the house still, as an unruly servant or slave, ever vexing and annoying them; and this *body of death* they shall have still cause to bewail, till death release them. This leprosy hath taken so deep root in the walls of this house, that it cannot perfectly be cleansed till it be taken down; and it is this, more than any other sorrows or afflictions of life, that makes the godly man not only content to die, but desirous, longing, with our Apostle, *to be dissolved, and be with Christ which is far better.*

As this teaches us the misery of man's nature, so it sets off and commends exceedingly the riches of God's grace. Are men naturally His enemies? Why then admire, first, His *patience* and *bounty* a little, and then we will speak of His *saving grace.* Could not He very easily ease Himself of His adversaries, as He says by the prophet? Isa. i. 24. Wants He power in His right hand to find out and cut off all His enemies? Surely no. Not only He hath power to destroy them all in a moment, but the very withdrawing of His hand

that upholds their being, (though they consider it not,) would make them fall to nothing. Yet is He pleased not only to spare transgressors, but to give them many outward blessings, *rain and fruitful seasons,* as the Apostle speaks, Acts xiv. 17. And the earth which is so full of man's rebellion, is yet more full of God's goodness: *The earth is full of Thy goodness,* says the Psalmist. It is remarkable, that that same reason which is given, Gen. vi. 5, of the justice of God in drowning the world, is, in chap. viii. ver. 21, rendered as the reason of God's resolved patience ever since: *And the Lord said, I will not curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.*

Then consider His *grace,* in finding a way of reconcilement, and not sparing His own Son, His only begotten Son, to accomplish it. Nor did the Son spare himself. O matchless love! to lay down his life, not for friends, but for strangers; not only so, but enemies, for unrighteous and ungodly persons, such as be at enmity against Him. Rom. v. 7, 8. And having done this, He sends his word, the message of reconciliation, to rebels, and sends His Spirit into the hearts of those whom He hath appointed to salvation, to change their spirits, that they perish not in disobedience: He brings *them near who were far off,* having slain this enmity by the death of His Son.

As many of you, then, as have hitherto heard this message of reconciliation in vain, be persuaded at last to give ear to it. This is all that God's ambassadors require, according to their instructions from Himself, that men would lay down their enmity against Him, and not be so foolish as wilfully to perish in it: *We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.* 2 Cor. v. 20.

Consider that this enmity is, 1*st*, unjust, 2*dly*, unhappy. (1.) Unjust it is, being against Him who is the chief object of love, who is altogether goodness, both in Himself and towards his creatures. It is too much not to love Him with most ardent and superlative affection; but to entertain enmity against Him is madness. As it was said to one who asked,

Why are the beautiful loved? *It is a blind man's question;* certainly we are blind if we see not cause enough, not only to desist from enmity, but to be inflamed with His love. One glance of His amiable countenance is sufficient to cause the most rebellious heart to yield, and lay down arms, and for ever devote itself to His services. No, we know him not, and therefore it is we hold out against Him. Is He not the living spring of all our comforts? Have we not from Him life, and breath, and all things? And is He not *ready to forgive iniquity, transgression, and sin?* Let mercy melt our hearts to Him, those sweet rays of love. Let His loving-kindness overcome these stubborn hearts and spirits of ours. Among enemies, the weaker usually seeks first for peace, but here it is the Mighty; Almighty God comes to entreat agreement with sinful clay.

(2.) But if this prevail not, then think how unhappy this enmity is. You who are so afraid of men, and those weak men, of men like yourselves, whose breath is in their nostrils, will ye not tremble at His power, and be afraid to continue on terms of hostility against Him who is the Lord of Hosts, who hath power both over soul and body, to kill both and cast them into hell? What is the stoutest of men, but as stubble to the flame of His wrath? *Our God is a consuming fire.* Heb. xii. 29. *The sinners in Zion are afraid,* says the Prophet. *Who shall dwell,* say they, *with devouring fire and everlasting burnings?* Isa. xxxiii. 14. Then, if you would not perish, when His wrath is kindled, take that word of Eliphaz, Job xxii. 21. *Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace; thereby good shall come unto thee.*

And to you, so many as He hath taken into friendship with Himself, look backward to the gulf you have escaped, and forward to the happiness you are appointed to, and let the joint consideration of both awaken your hearts and tongues to praises. How can your hearts contain such a wonder of love as He hath manifested to you, and not run over in songs and praise?

And, as you owe Him praises, so study, being made His friends, to become more like Him. That same *idem velle et idem nolle*, to love and hate the same things with Him, will be a sure testimony of friendship. And because carnality, or fleshly and earthly mindedness, is here made the character of enmity, mortify those affections, nail them to that cross of Christ whereby the enmity was taken away. And further, being once admitted into friendship, labour for a further degree of intimacy with Him, and forbear every thing that may hinder that. Use frequent converse with Him; for that both entertains and increases friendship. If any thing fall out on your part, (as it too often does,) that may occasion any strangeness betwixt you and your God, rest not till it be removed. And if you walk in this way, it shall undoubtedly, at length, bring you where you shall abide in His presence for ever, and shall no more fear any breach or interruption of enjoying Him. *To him be praise!* Amen.

SERMON X.

ROMANS xiii. 5, 6, 7, 8.

Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.

For, for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.

Render therefore to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour.

Owe no man any thing, but to love one another; for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

THE wisdom and goodness of God, which shine in the natural order and dependence of things in the frame of the great world, appear likewise, and commend themselves to us, in the civil order He hath instituted in the societies of men, the lesser

world. As out of the same mass He made the heavens and the earth, and the other elements betwixt them, one higher than another, and gave them different stations and qualities, yet so different as to be linked and concatenated together, *concordiâ discordia*, and all for the concern and benefit of the whole; thus, for the good of men, hath the Lord assigned these different stations of rule and subjection, (though all are of one race, Acts xvii. 26,) raising from among men some above the rest, and clothing them with such authority as hath some representment of Himself, and accordingly communicating to them His own name: *I have said, ye are gods.* And the very power that is in magistracy to curb and punish those that despise it, the Apostle useth as a strong and hard cord to bind on the duty of obedience, a cord of *necessity*. But he adds another of a higher necessity, that binds more strongly, and yet more sweetly, that of *conscience*. *Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.*

Observe, 1. This is the main consideration which closes the discourse, the great cord that binds on and fastens all the rest; all the arguments foregoing, therefore, are mainly here to be pressed. Have a reverential and conscientious respect to the ordinance of God in the institution of Government, and to the providence of God in His choice of those particular persons whom He calls to it. Contain thyself in thy own station, and submit to those set higher by the Lord, in obedience to Him. This, indeed, is the only true spring of all obedience, both to God, and to men for Him, and according to His ordinance. To regulate the outward carriage, without the living principle of an enlightened and sanctified conscience within, is to build without a foundation. This is the thing God eyes most. He looks through the surface of men's actions to the bottom, follows them into their source, examines from what motives and reasons they flow. He sees not only the handle of the dial, but all the wheels and weights of the clock that are the cause of its motion, and accordingly judges

both men and their actions to be good or evil, as the inward frame and secret motions of the heart are. In His own worship, the outside of it may have the same visage and plausible appearance in a multitude convened to it and concurring in it, and no human eye can trace a difference; and yet, Oh, what vast difference doth God's eye discover amongst them! He sees the multitude of those who are driven to His house by the power of civil and church laws, or carried to it only with the stream of company and custom (and these, I fancy, take up the most room in our churches); but He sees here and there, where such are in any corner, who worship Him in singleness of heart, out of conscience to His holy command, and under a sense of their many obligations, those who dare not let pass any opportunity they can reach, of doing service to their Lord, and who dare not slight His word, and thus coming *for conscience sake*, they do present their souls to receive His word, give their hearts up to receive the impression of it, put themselves under it, to be stamped by it according to that, Rom. vi. 17: *But ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.* So, likewise, He sees those who bear His name to His people, the ministers of His word. If they preach constantly, and live blamelessly, and are diligent and irreprovable in all the external parts of their walking, this last satisfies men's questions in their inspection and visitings; but God's inquiry and visiting searches deeper. He asks from what heart all this comes, whether from a holy conscience of the weight and high importance of their holy calling, and a faithful respect to the interest of their Master's glory and His people's souls. And thus He, as supreme judge, sits and considers the proceedings of judges and magistrates; not only whether they do that which is just (for often they cannot, easily or safely, do otherwise), but whether they do it with regard to Him or not; that is, whether they judge righteously, *for conscience sake*, or not; whether they do consider Him, as sitting above them, when they sit down upon the bench or seat of justice, and *do indeed* truly *speak righte-*

ousness, Psal. lviiii. 1, or whether in heart they work wickedness. If they have any corrupt end, or hearts that are not straight, He sits on their heart and judges it; whether this be done either for base gain, or vain glory, or by compulsion, or outward necessity, or danger of censure, or whether it be this latter, an inward *necessity of conscience*, which makes a true willingness.

Thus people, if they obey *for wrath*, that is, for fear of the magistrate's sword, more than *for conscience* of the Lord's command, God accounts not this obedience, but in His judgment it goes for no better than rebellion. It is to be feared, too many magistrates, and others, have in this nation embraced the Reformation, not at all for conscience sake, but only for wrath, from fear of laws and authority. But although we are not able to follow forth this search to the full, that being the Lord's own prerogative, yet, truly, where it is evident to us that there is nothing of conscience, though in civil things it may pass, yet, in things that are peculiarly matters of conscience in religion, men ought to be somewhat wary, according to the utmost of due discerning; and we are, possibly, somewhat to blame in the promiscuous admitting of such, whose carriage, yea, whose profession and religion speaks aloud, that their compliance was wholly constrained obedience, only *for wrath*, and not *for conscience*.

If civil authority is to be obeyed most for conscience, then, church authority, that is more symbolical with conscience, and hath nearer reference to it, ought to aim most at that. *Conviction* and *conversion* is our work, and not *constraint;* to bring people, both by the word and by a way of discipline suiting and backing it, to a sense of sin and spiritual thoughts of God and His holy law, that they may be subject more for conscience than for wrath.

And ye people, labour more to find the actings of that holy fear of God and conscience of His will in all your ways. Study to have an inward light, a practical, sanctifying light, directing you; and be not merely held in as beasts, by the authority and

laws of men, but learn to know and be sensible of the sovereign authority of the most high God and His law, and to have respect unto all His commandments. If this were once done, how regular a motion would it keep amongst all superiors and inferiors of all sorts, in families and states, the one commanding, the other obeying in God! It would be as sweet music in the celestial choir of their lives and affairs. Right-informing and right-moving consciences would be as continual teachers within, directing all in obedience, and would make it both more constant, sweet, and pleasant, as natural motion; whereas that is grievous and violent which is from wrath, or outward power, and therefore lasts not: as the Israelites worshipped God aright while their good judges lived, and ran after idols when they were removed.

Again: This same obedience *for conscience,* ennobles and sublimates men's actions even in civil things, makes them have somewhat Divine, turns all into sacrifice to God, when all is done for God; even servants and children obeying masters and parents, and subjects magistrates, for His command's sake; still thinking, in the whole course of their regular, due carriage, in their very callings, This I do for God, my ordinary labour and works, and my just obedience to men, I offer up to Him. This is the philosopher's stone, that turns actions of lower metal into gold; *I set the Lord always before me.* Psal. xvi. 8.

Obs. 2. Kings, and other powers of the world, who are the enemies, and sometimes the enraged persecutors of our holy religion, mistake their quarrel, and are very wrongfully misprejudiced against it, when, upon that false supposition, they hate and oppose it, suspecting it as an enemy to their dignity and authority; whereas there is nothing that doth so much assert their just power as religion doth. Civil laws may tie the *hands* and *tongue* to their obedience, but religion binds all due subjection to them upon the very *consciences* of their people. Therefore they are both ungrateful and unwise, in using their power against religion, which it so much strengthens.

Their power should strengthen it, both by way of due return, to correspond with it in that, and even for its own interest, receiving a new establishment to itself by establishing religion. Even that master of irreligious policy, Machiavel, confesses that the profession of religion is a friend to authority. But if the shadow of it do any thing that way, we see, contrary to his profane supposition, the substance and truth of it doth it much more.

Obs. 3. If *for conscience sake* we are to practise this subjection, then, surely in nothing is it our duty to be subject, against the true rule of conscience, and the prime object of conscience, the authority and law of God. That is the first and highest, our perpetual, unalterable engagement to Him, binding both kings and subjects, both high and low. And if rulers leave their station, we ought to keep ours still in a straight subjection to God. For the extent of friendship and all other relations, and of all subjection and obedience, is to be ruled and bounded, *usque ad aras. Give to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's*, but nothing of God's: that is neither ours to give nor his to receive.

For, for this cause pay you tribute also.] This the Apostle gives as a sign of that confessed right which magistrates have to the subjection and obedience of the people, that in all nations this homage and acknowledgment is due to them: *Tribute to whom tribute is due.* Which it may be he the rather mentions, because some question might exist, what might Christians do concerning this. However, this, according to the constitution of several places, he takes as granted, to be not only lawful, but due to be rendered. Here we are not to insist on the scanning of this; but certainly, as the power of a magistrate is not in this, nor in any other thing, absolute and unbounded, so the legal and just paying of tribute and other revenues by the people, argues their engagement to those set over them, and is to be rendered, not as wages to a mercenary servant, but as an *honorary due* to their place and calling, who are the *ministers of God* in civil government. So, also, con-

venient yet liberal maintenance to the ministers of God's own house is their right, yet not to enrich them; nor yet ought it to be given grudgingly, as undue, or superciliously, as to servants, but with the cheerfulness and respect agreeable to the Lord's servants, who watch for their souls.

All tribute and obedience still relate to this, and are grounded on it, the Lord's institution of power and government for the good of men. Though it sometimes prove otherwise in the exercise of it, yet the ordinance is pure, and most wisely suited to its end; from which the sin and corruption of men turn it but too often, to the hurt of both the ruler himself and of the ruled. Eccl. viii. 9. *There is a time wherein one man ruleth over another to his own hurt;* each proving a scourge to the other, in the just judgment of God upon both for their iniquities; making *a fire from Abimelech to devour the men of Shechem*, and the men of *Shechem* to deal treacherously with *Abimelech*. Judges ix. 20. Yet still the thing itself remains good. Many skilful physicians may kill instead of curing, yet it is but a caprice to decry all remedies, and the use of things medicinal, which the God of nature hath furnished for that use. Men may, and alas! most men do, prejudice their own health, by either intemperate or, in some way, irregular diet; yet this makes nothing against the continual necessity and use of food, nor can dissuade any from using it. Thus, the abuses of authority infringe not this, that magistrates are a public good: yea the unjust are better than none, tyranny is better than anarchy; there is some justice done in the most unjust government.

But thus, they who are exalted to rule ought to consider who raised them, and for what they are raised, and so faithfully to do justice. They are raised high, as the stars are set in their orbits, for influence and the good of the inferior world, and like the mountains which rise above the valleys, not to be places of prey and ruin, but, by the streams they send out, to refresh them. So, from magistrates, *judgment ought to run down as water, and justice as a mighty stream.* They ought

to consider themselves as *ministers;* though called *magistrates* with relation to the people, yet *ministers* in relation to God, [λειτούργοι Θεοῦ] and the people's in Him, as the word λειτούργοι imports, being constant labourers for their good; even as the sun is a *minister,* God's minister of heat and light to the earth. Would they look up thus to God, it would make them look down on their inferiors, not with the ill aspect of pride and cruelty, but with the benign looks of good-will, fidelity, and vigilancy for their welfare, knowing that they are appointed for this very use in the world; not referring to that which is nearest here and nearest themselves, *the receiving of tribute,* but the remotest good, which is the chief end for which their tribute and themselves are appointed, the punishing of the wicked and the encouragement of the good.

Render therefore to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour. The Apostle enlarges his exhortation to the general rule of equity. The humble, upright mind will willingly comply with this, and pay respect to men, in obedience to God, and therefore primarily to Him, which the most neglect. *Honour* and *fear* are due to Him as to our Father and Master, and yet where is it to be found? *If I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear?* Mal. i. 6. The *tribute* of praise and glory in all these respects is due, and ought not to be purloined, nor any part detained; but how few are faithful in this! Much *uncustomed goods* pass among our hands in the course of our lives, many things wherein we are not mindful to give glory, entire glory to God. But He cannot be deceived; if we go on, He will take us in our quietest *conveyance,* and all will be forfeited. We shall certainly lose all, if all glory return not to Him. All that we have and are should we daily and heartily offer up to Him, from whom we have life, and breath, and all things.

Owe no man any thing, but to love one another.] That which the Apostle set before himself, as his own study and

exercise, he doth, in the latter part of this Epistle, set forth at large, as the duty of every Christian, to *keep a conscience void of offence towards God and men.* Acts xxiv. 16. And having, in the former part of it treated amply and excellently of the doctrine of Christian faith and salvation, and ascended to its highest cause, he descends from thence to give the rules of a Christian life. And he reduces them to these two: 1. To give the Lord His due, which is, *ourselves entire:* our bodies ought to be *a living sacrifice,* and *that* they are not without the soul. And it is love in the soul, that offers up this whole burnt offering to God, the fire that makes it ascend. 2. Towards men likewise, love is all. Of which, in many several acts of it, he spake likewise in the former chapter, ver. 9, *&c.*; and having inserted an exhortation to subjection to human authority as a Divine institution, he now returns to that main, comprehensive, and universal duty of love, and passes fitly from the mention of other particular dues to superiors, to this, as the general due, or standing debt, which all men owe one to another. So, I conceive, this is not intended for the further pressing of that particular duty of subjection, by reducing it (as seeming hard in itself) to the sweet and pleasant rule or law of love, but that he passes wholly from that particular to this common duty, so as that it is not excluded, but comprehended here with the rest, though not specially aimed at; a little rivulet running awhile in its own channel, in the foregoing discourse, which falls here in again to the main current of the doctrine of love, begun in the former chapter. And here he chooses, adapting it to the strain of the discourse immediately foregoing it, to express this under the notion of a debt: *Owe nothing, but love.*

1. Let other debt be removed: *Owe nothing.* That is, Be not willing to continue debtors of any thing to any, by undue retaining of such things as, being paid, are not owing.

2. This is a constant debt, which you must still pay, and yet still owe—*love.* And the reason added, is most enforcing,

that we should be willing to continue both *payers* and yet *debtors* of it. The dueness of it appears in this, that the *Law* requires it, and the completeness of it, in that it is *all* the Law requires: *Love is the fulfilling of the Law.* Which is amplified in the two subsequent verses.

This is most fully true, take love fully, as it looks on its full object, *God* and *Man;* and so it is the fulfilling of the whole Law which relates to those two in its two tables. Take it particularly, as acting towards men, (as here it is,) and so it fulfils that part of the Law, that whole table, which respects man. The most of those commandments are expressly here set down, (ver. 9,) and the omission of one is fully supplied by that addition, *If there be any other.* Then again, it is cleared by the common aim and result of them all, which is to keep our neighbour undamaged, and *that,* love doth most surely and fully; therefore it fulfils all. That negative, *worketh no ill to his neighbour,* answers the strain of all the commandments, which is, to defend our neighbours from our *ill,* being most of them such, and all of them such that are here specified; yet, both they, and this sum of them, involving the contrary, the working of all possible *good* to our neighbour; in which, still love suits it, nothing being both more averse from wrong, and more active in good, than love: as the same Apostle hath it, 1 Cor. xiii. Besides that it cannot *do,* no, nor so much as *think* evil, it is naturally carried to bounty and kindness, and cannot cease from doing good, a plant that is fruitful all the year long.

The Apostle hath very good authority for this abridgment of the Law; our Saviour himself, Matt. xxii. 40. And he takes it out of the books of the Law themselves, and certifies us, that it is the substance and sum both of the Law and the Prophets. Were this love absolutely perfect, the fulfilling of the Law would be so too; and where it is sincere, as the Apostle requires it, there is a sincere and evangelical obedience, or fulfilling of the Law.

In the text consider, 1. The largeness of its object. 2. The largeness of its acting. 3. The height of its true original.

1. The largeness of the object. So far as thou canst acquit thyself, owe nothing else to any; but love, *owe that to all.* Not a like familiar converse necessarily to all, nor a like measure of beneficence, nor a like degree of love, but yet, love alike sincere and real to all. Not either a false, or an empty, fair carriage, but holy Christian love, love rooted in thy heart, and springing up in thy actions, even towards all men, as thy opportunity and ability serves thee, and their condition requires of thee; not hating nor despising any for their poverty in estate, or deformity of body, or defects of mind, nor for that which works most on men, injuries done to thyself. All they can do, cannot give thee an *acquittance*, or free thee of this *debt* of love; for thou art bound to Another. This is the rule of Jesus Christ, and the badge of Christians, to love their very enemies. But this, Oh, how rare is it! How few attain it! Yea, how few endeavour to attain it! On the contrary, it is by many given over as a desperate, impossible business, they judging of it not according to that Spirit of Christ that is his, but according to the corrupt rancour and bitterness of their own natural perverse spirits. Yea, and too many disdain it as a *poorness* and *sheepishness* of spirit to suffer and forgive. Be it so; yet is it such a *sheepishness* as makes a man like *Jesus Christ, who, as a sheep before the shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth*, when his heart within was compassionate towards them, as appeared when he opened it concerning them, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* This is true greatness of spirit, to partake of *His* spirit, that is the highest and best of spirits, and it is the spirit of *meekness* and *love.* How much is this above the common spirit of the world! Truly base and poor is that which is decomposed and put out of frame with every touch; whereas this is mighty, and triumphs indeed over all provocations and injuries.

2. Let us consider the largeness of its acting: it goes through the Law, fulfils it all. That command, the first in the second Table, which is not here expressed, is it not Love that makes all concerned in it to fulfil it, that produceth mildness and moderation in superiors, and faithfulness and willing obedience in inferiors; makes both authority and subjection sweet and easy, where love commands and love obeys?

And for the next, *Thou shalt not kill*, doth not love, as the sun-beams put out the fire, by its Divine heat eat out the earthly, yea, the infernal fire of fixed malice or rash anger, that burns naturally in the hearts of men? Such anger is called *brutish*, Ezek. xxi. 31; *burning* or *brutish;* and, on the contrary, the ambiguity (Prov. xvii. 27) is happy, *of an excellent* or *of a cool spirit;* for the *cool spirit* is so, cool from base passion, but burning truly with this love. And then this fire is by very small, and many times merely imaginary causes, so easily blown up, that it flames forth into gross murders, or at least such injuries and violences, or contentions and revilings, as go in God's account, and are writ down in His book, for murders. And He doth not misjudge, nor misname things, but they are really what He accounts them. Love can generously pass over those things about which folly and pride makes such a noise, *Oh! can I bear this and that?* And thou wouldest, by so saying, speak thy stout-heartedness. Fool, is this stoutness and strength? Is it not rather the greatest weakness to be able to bear nothing? Have not the weakest persons much of that kind of stoutness and strength, who are the soonest moved and disquieted, women and children, and sick or aged persons? But love, Christian love to thy brother, makes the mind truly strong and composed, not easily stirred against him for every trifle, nay, not for greater matters. Love can *endure* much, yea, *all things*, says the Apostle, 1 Cor. xiii. 7; it hath strength to stand under them, and stand firm; whereas base minds, void of love, break all to pieces under a very small weight. Love *beareth all things*, as the supporters of a strong and firm building; or rather, as

a house, it *covers all*, for so the word signifies. It doth not blaze abroad the failings of men; yea, it *hides* much, *covers a multitude of sins*, not only from the eyes of others, but even from a man's own eyes; makes him not behold and look on those things that might provoke him. Yea, it is ingenious and inventive of th fairest construction of things, to take them by the best side, in the favourable sense; and so long as there is any agreeable way to interpret any thing favourably, will not have a hard thought of it, *thinks no ill*, as there it is. Not only hath it no active evil thoughts of revenge, or returning evil, but willingly it doth not *judge ill* of what is done by others, and what might be so looked on as to provoke; οὐλογίζεται, doth not *reckon* wrongs so high as want of charity moves the most to do, it *sets them low*. And as a healthful constitution is sweet itself, and relishes all things right, so there is more true pleasure and content of mind in forgiving, than ever any man found in revenge. That is but a feverish delight which malice and anger have wrought, working, perhaps, greedily, but it is indeed a distemper. This love is the very root of peace and concord, a humble grace, that is not *lifted up* and *insolent*, as the word there is, and so doth not breed jars about punctilios: it esteems so well of others, and so meanly of itself, that it cannot well be crossed by any in that matter of undervaluing. But vain spirits are puffed up with a little approbation, and as easily kindled up with any affront or apprehended disgrace. Love is not lightly put out of temper, as, in sickly constitutions, a fit of fever or ague is brought on by any blast or wrong touch of diet: it is of a stronger digestion, and firmer health.

Then for that commandment, *Thou shalt not commit adultery*: all things of that kind, though they spring from a kind of love, yet are not from this love *from above*, but, as the Apostle James distinguishes wisdom, proceeds from the love that is *sensual* and *devilish*. *Love* is not the true name of it, but base and brutish *lust*. And generally, all profane societies, and sortings of men one with another, are most contrary to

this pure love. The drunkards who are cup-friends, as they are full of jars, and have no constancy, but are unstable as that wherein their friendship lies, their liquor, are a vile despicable society, not worthy of men, much less of Christians. This sin hath affinity with uncleanness, and is usually ranked there. Right love to a tippler is not to sit down and guzzle with him, but to reprove and labour to reclaim him, and where that cannot be done, to avoid him. To wicked persons we owe, not a complacency or delight, which is most contrary to this love, but, hating their sin, we owe them love, and the desiring, and, as far as love can, the procuring of their conversion and salvation. Wicked converse cannot consist with this love, which is the fulfilling of the law, and not a combination for the breaking of it, and the joining of their strength together for that end. Love *rejoiceth not in iniquity, but in the truth:* it makes not men rejoice together in sin. So foul, unclean affections, and a society in order to the gratifying them, are most contrary to it. True love is most tender of the chastity of others, and cannot abide an impure thought in itself.

So as to the next precept, *Thou shalt not steal*, love would be loth to enrich or advantage itself upon the damage of others in any kind. It doth most faithfully and singly seek the profit and prosperity of our neighbour, even as our own. And if this took place, of how much use were it in the world! But Oh! it is rare. This *meum* and *tuum* is the grand cause of the ill understanding and discords that are amongst men, when things are not managed by this love, but by self-love.

And so, as to that, *Thou shalt not bear false witness:* the cherishing and preserving of the good name of our brethren is a proper and very remarkable fruit of this love, which is so far from forging false, defaming stories, that it will rather *excuse*, if it may be done, or if not, will *pity* the real failings of men which tend to their reproach; and, on the contrary, will teach men to rejoice in the good carriage and good esteem of their brethren, as in their own.

n the end, love works such a *complacency* in the good of

others, and such a *contentation* with our own estate, that it most powerfully banishes that unruly humour of *coveting*, which looks on the condition of others with envy, and on our own with grudging and discontent. This law of love written within, doth not only rectify and order the hands and the tongue, but the jealousies, the very stirrings of the heart; it corrects the usual disorder of its motion, and bars those uncharitable, inordinate thoughts, that do so abound and swarm in carnal minds.

3. The *original* of this love, is that other love which corresponds to the other part, the first and chief point of the Law, our *duty towards God.* Love to Him is the sum and source of all obedience. When the whole soul and mind is possessed with that, then all is acceptable and sweet that He commands; first, what He commands as immediately referable to Himself, and then, what is the rule of our carriage to men, as being prescribed and commanded by Him. For so, and no otherwise, is this love *the fulfilling of the Law*, when it flows from that *first* love, love to God, whose law it is that commands this other love to men. Some men may have somewhat like it, by a mildness and ingenuousness of nature, being inoffensive and well-disposed towards all: but then only doth it fulfil the Law, when out of regard to the Law of God it obeys, and obeys out of love to Him whose law it is. So then, the love of God in the heart is the spring of right and holy love to our neighbour, both, (1.) Because in obedience to Him whom we love sovereignly, we shall love others sincerely, because He will have it so. That is reason enough to the soul possessed and taken up with His love. It loves nothing, how lovely soever, but in Him and for Him, in order and subordination to His love, and in respect to His will; and it loves any thing, how unlovely soever, taking it in that contemplation. It loves not the dearest friend but in God, and can love the hatefullest enemy for Him: *Amicum in Deo, et inimicum propter Deum.* [Augustine.] His love can beautify the most unamiable object, and make it lovely. He saith of a worthless, undeserving

man, or thy most undeserving enemy, Love him for My sake, because it pleases Me; and that is reason enough to one who loves Him. (2.) There is that dilating, sweetening virtue in love to God, that it can act in no other way to men but as becomes love. Base self-love contracts the heart, and is the very root of all sin, the chief wickedness in our corrupt nature; but the love of God assimilates the soul to Him, makes it Divine, and therefore bountiful, full of love to all. So these two contradict not, *Love the Lord with all thy heart*, and *thy neighbour as thyself.* If all our love must go to God, what remains, say you, for our neighbour? Indeed, all must go upwards, and be all placed on Him, and from thence it is resounded and regulated downwards to men, according to His will. But self-love brings forth pride, and cruelty, and covetousness, and uncleanness, and disdain of others, and all such kind of monsters; so, it is the main breaking of the Law.

All that can be said will not persuade men to this, till the Lord by His love teach it and impress it on the heart. Know that this is the badge of Christ's followers, and his great rule and law given to them; and if you will follow him, that you may come to be where he is, then study this, that as our Lord Christ loved us, so, also, we ought to love one another.

SERMON XI.

PREFACE.

Great and various are the evils that lodge within the heart of man. Hence proceed *evil thoughts*, *adulteries*, *murders*, and many other mischiefs, as our Saviour specifies there, Matt. xv. 19: they come forth apace, and yet the heart is not emptied of them. But was this heart thus at first, when it came newly forth of the hands of its Maker? Surely not. *Man was made*

upright, but he found out many inventions. Eccl. vii. 29. Soon did the heart find the way to corrupt itself; but to renew itself, is as impossible as to have been the author of its own creation. Easily could it deface the precious characters of God's image, but it passes the art of men and angels to restore them. Only the Son of God, who for that purpose took on him our nature, can make us, according to the Apostle's phrase, *partakers of the Divine nature.* It is He alone that can banish those unclean spirits, and keep possession that they return no more. Have not they made a happy change of guests, who have those infernal troops turned out of doors, and the King of Glory fixing his abode within them? This is the voice of the Gospel: *Lift up your heads, ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may enter in.* Psal. xxiv. 7. But small is the number of those who open where this voice is daily sounded. Yea, some there are, who grow worse under the frequent preaching of the word, as if sin were emulous, and, as is said of virtue, would grow by opposition. The truth is, too many of us turn these serious exercises of religion into an idle divertisement. Take heed that formality, and custom, and novelty, do not often help to fill up many rooms in our church. It were indeed a breach of charity, to entertain the fulness of your assemblies with an ill construction: no, it is to be commended. But would to God we were more careful to shew our religion in our lives, to study to know better the deceits and impostures of our own hearts, and to gain daily more victory over our secret and best beloved sins! Let our intentions, then, be to meet with Christ here, and to admit him gladly to dwell and rule within us. If he conquer our inward enemies, those without shall not be able to hurt us. If he deliver us from our sinful lusts, he will stir our own distrustful fears. And that such may be the fruits of our meeting, let us turn ourselves towards the throne of grace, with humble prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, the righteous.

Psalm lxxvi. 10.

Surely, the wrath of man shall praise Thee: the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain.

What manner of man is this, said the passengers in the ship, *that even the winds and the sea obey him?* Matt. viii. 27. Christ suddenly turns a great tempest into a greater calm. Surely, those are no ordinary words of command, which swelling waves and boisterous winds, in the midst of their rage, are forced to hear, and taught to understand and obey. Therefore, the holding of the seas in the hollow of His hand, the bridling of the wind, and riding upon the wings of it, we find peculiarly attributed to the Almighty. But no less, if not more wonderful, is another of His prerogatives, to wit, His sovereignty over all mankind, over the divers and strange motions of the heart of man. Admirable is it to govern those, both in respect of their multitude and irregularity. Consider we what millions of men dwell at once upon the face of the earth, and again, what troops of several imaginations will pass through the fancy of any one man, within the compass of one day; it is much to keep eye upon them, and to behold them all at once, but far more to command and control them all. Yet, if they were all loyal and willingly obedient, were they tractable and easily curbed, it were more easy for us to conceive how they might be governed. But to bound and overrule the unruly hearts of men, the most of whom continually are either plotting or acting rebellion against their Lord, to make them all concur and meet at last in one end, cannot be done but by a power and a wisdom that are both infinite. That God whose name we often mention, but seldom think on His excellency, is alone the absolute monarch of men's hearts, and the ruler of all their motions. He hath them limited while they seem most free, and works His own glory out of their attempts, while they strive most to dishonour Him. *Surely, the wrath of man shall praise Thee.*

This Psalm is made up of two different sorts of thoughts; the one arising out of *particular experience*, and the other, out of a *general doctrine*. Those drawn from *experience* are set down in the verses preceding the text; and in it, with those that follow, is contained the *doctrine*, with a *duty* annexed to it, which two are faith's main supporters. Past experiences verify the doctrine, and the generality of the doctrine serves to explain the particular experiences to all wise observers. There is not a treasure of the *merits* of saints in the Church, as some dream, but there is a treasure of the precious *experiences* of the saints, which every believer hath right to make use of; and these we should be versed in, that we may have them in readiness at hand, in time of need, and know how to use them, to draw both comfort from them to ourselves, and arguments to use with God.

The words contain clearly two propositions, both of them concerning the *wrath of man:* the former hath the event of it, *Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee:* the latter, the limitation of it, *The remainder of wrath Thou wilt restrain.*

That the virtues and graces of men do praise the Lord, all men easily understand, for they flow from Him: His image and superscription is upon them, and therefore no wonder if He has from them a tribute of glory. Who knows not that faith praises Him? *Abraham believed and gave glory to God.* Rom. iv. 20. Good works, the fruits of faith, praise Him too. *Herein is my Father glorified*, says our Saviour, *that ye bear much fruit.* John xv. 8. But that the inordinate wrath of man should praise Him, may seem somewhat strange. Were it God's own wrath, (since wrath is attributed to Him in Scripture,) that might praise Him, for it is always most just. Or were it a due and moderate anger of man, upon just cause, that were fit for praising Him too, in despite of the Stoics. But that *wicked* and *disordered wrath*, (which is undoubtedly here meant,) that the *wrath of men*, which is both uncomely and dishonourable for themselves, though they think otherwise, that even such a wrath should honour God and praise Him,

argues well both that He hath good right to praises, when every thing, even things that seem contrary to His nature, as well as to His law, do pay them to Him; and that He hath great power and wisdom, who obtains what is due to Him even from those persons and things which of themselves are most unwilling and unfit to pay it. This is the excellent skill of His wisdom, to draw that which shall go into the making up of the precious composition of His praise, out of this *poison;* for so the word here used for *wrathful heat* doth sometimes signify. And this wrath often proves so, a deadly poison both to those it is incensed against, and to the very breast that breeds it, and wherein it is kindled.

But for the clearer understanding of this, I conceive it will be requisite to consider more distinctly, first, what this *wrath of man* is; secondly, how it can *praise God;* and lastly, the *infallibility* of this event, *Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee.*

I. In the cxlviiith Psalm, where David summons the creatures to meet in that song of praise, to keep that full concert, he calls not only the heavens and the inhabitants of it, angels and lights, but those of the lower world to bear their part in it; and not only men, beasts, cattle, creeping things, and the flying fowl, but those creatures which do most resemble this wrath here spoken of, fire, stormy tempest, and dragons, &c. The tenor of this Psalm doth shew, that by the *wrath of man* is to be understood, the undue rage of evil and ungodly men against those whom God owns for His people. The word here used, signifies a *hot* or *inflaming* wrath; and indeed, such is the feverish, distempered anger of the Church's enemies. And as too much heat is an enemy to solid reason, this hot wrath of theirs makes them incapable of wise deliberation in themselves, and inflexible to the good advice of others. It is true, they take counsel how to execute their wrath, as we shall hear anon, but they take no counsel that may cool it. Anger, described by its material cause, is called a boiling of the blood about the heart; but this ariseth from

the apprehension of something offensive, kindling a desire of revenge. Now, it is a wonder what the powers of the world find in Christ and his harmless flock, that can incense them. St. James says of the tongue, that *it is set on fire of hell.* The same is the origin of this wrath. *Why do the heathen rage?* saith the Psalmist, Psal. ii. 1. That is, not only to what purpose, intimating that it is a fruitless rage, and void of success, in regard of God's power, but *Why*, that is, *upon what occasion*, checking the rage as groundless and without cause, in regard of Christ and his Church's innocency. The cause is only within themselves, to wit, that unhappy antipathy of the serpent's seed against the seed of the woman. Thus, this *wrath of man* is the causeless, malicious enmity of the wicked against the Church of God. And under the name of this passion I take to be here comprised likewise, all the attendants of it, all their crafty complotments and devices for the acting of their wrath. As there is mention of the nation's rage against Christ, in the second Psalm, so, likewise, of the consultations of those who are of quality fit for it: *The rulers take counsel together.* Further, this wrath is not barely their inward fire, but the vent of it, when it flames into cruel and outrageous practices, including likewise all the instruments they make use of. And of all these it is true, that God shall gain glory by them. *Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee.*

The *wrath of man*, says the Apostle, *accomplisheth not the righteousness of God.* Jam. i. 20. How then can it accomplish His praises? And this is the second thing propounded.

Are grapes gathered of thorns or figs of thistles? Surely not. Therefore I called this praise, not the fruit or proper effect of man's wrath, but the event or consequent of it, by the efficacy of Divine providence. *The wrath of man shall praise Thee.* That is, the use which Thou wilt make of it shall tend to Thy praise. Thou wilt produce such effects from it, both in the Church and upon Thine enemies, when thou

sufferest Thy wrath to break forth, as shall furnish more matter of Thy praises than if Thou hadst altogether restrained it. To instance this in some few particulars:

It is the fury of the Church's enemies, that has made known to the world the invincible *courage and patience of the saints.* Those ages which have been most monstrous in persecution, have most of all graced Christianity. Had there been no persecuting emperors, who would have heard of those primitive martyrs who triumphed over the cruelty of their torments? Were there no persecution, nor peril nor sword, against believers, we should not have heard the Apostle say, immediately after the mention of those, *In all these we are more than conquerors.* They could not have been so much as *conquerors*, had there been no *conflict.*

Again, as the wrath of man praises God in the invincible patience of the saints, so, likewise, in the *immoveable stability of the Church.* Is it not wonderful how so small and weak a company as the Church hath often been reduced to, yea, hath always been in respect of the world, could escape the mouths of so many lions, so many enraged enemies that were ready to devour it? And that we may see that this tends solely to the praise of her great Protector, look to the Church's song penned by the royal prophet; it is the cxxivth Psalm: *If it had not been the Lord that was on our side, when men rose up against us, then they had swallowed us up quick.* The great monarchies and kingdoms of the world, which have risen with so much splendour, have had their periods, and been buried in the dust. That golden-headed and silver-bodied image degenerated into worse metal as it went lower, and the brittle feet was the cause of the fall and breaking of all the rest. But the kingdom of Jesus Christ, though despicable in the world, and exposed to the wrath of the world in all ages, stands firm and cannot be removed. There is a common emblem of the winds blowing from all quarters, and upon the globe of the earth, being in the middle of them, is written *Immobilis.* This fitly resembles the Church. Why,

it seems to be the sport of all the winds, but is indeed so established, that all of them, yea, *the very gates of hell cannot prevail against it.* Now, the more the Church's enemies labour and moil themselves to undo her, the more do their weakness and the power of her Lord appear; so that thus *the wrath of man doth praise Him.*

When was the church free from the world's wrath? To say nothing of the Church of the Jews, did not those wicked emperors of Rome think to have made the Christian Church short-lived, to have drowned her newly born, in floods of her own blood? And in latter ages, who knows not the cruelties that have been practised by the Turk in the East, and the proud prelate of Rome in the West? By which she hath sometimes been brought to so obscure and low a point, that if you can follow her in history, it is by the track of her blood: and if you would see her, it is by the light of those fires in which her martyrs have been burnt. Yet hath she still come through and survived all that wrath, and still shall survive, till she be made perfectly triumphant.

Further: men's wrath tends to God's praise in this, that God, giving way to it, doth so manage it by His sublime providence, that it often directly crosses their own ends, and conduces manifestly to His. Pharaoh thought that his dealing more cruelly with the Jews in their tasks and burden was wisdom: *Let us work wisely*, says he. But whereas their ordinary servility was become familiar to them, and they were tamed to it, that same accession of new tyranny did prepare and dispose the Israelites for a desire of departure, and their departure made way for Pharaoh's destruction. Undigestible insolency and rage, hastening to be great, makes kingdoms cast them off, which would have been far longer troubled with their wickedness, had it been more moderate. Surely, then, the wrath of man commends the *wisdom* of God, when He makes him by that contrive and afford the means of his own downfall. *The steps of his strength shall be straitened, and his own counsel shall cast him down*, says Bildad. Job

xviii. 7. And that is a sad fall: as that eagle that was shot with an arrow trimmed with her own feathers.

But to close this point. It is out of all question, that the deserved punishment of man's unjust wrath doth always glorify the justice of God; and the more He gives way to their wrath, the more notable shall be both their punishment and the justice of it. And though God seems neglective of His people and of His praise, while man's wrath prevails, yet the truth is, He never comes too late to vindicate His care of both; and when he defers longest, the enemy pays dear interest for the time of forbearance. In his eternal decree, He resolved to permit the course of man's wrath for his own glory, and when the period which He hath fixed is come, He stops man's wrath, and gives course unto the justice of His own. Nor is there then any possibility of escaping. He will right Himself, and be known by executing judgment. *Surely, the wrath of man shall praise Thee.*

And that is the IIId thing propounded, the *infallibility of the event.*

The Author of nature governs all His creatures, each in a suitable way to the nature he hath given them. He maintains in some things, a *natural necessity* of working, *contingency* in others, and in others, *liberty;* but all of them are subject to this *necessity* of effecting inevitably His eternal purposes. And this necessity is no ways repugnant to the due liberty of man's will. Some entertain and maintain the truth; some plot, others act and execute, against it; some please themselves with a wise neutrality, and will appear so indifferent that it would seem they might be accepted of all sides for judges of controversies. And all these find no less liberty to wind and turn themselves whither they please, than if no higher hand had the winding of them. Yet shall not only the *zeal* of the godly, but even the *wrath* of the enemy, and the *cold discretion* of the neutral, *all* tend to His praise whose supreme will has a secret, but a sure and infallible sway in all their actions. Whilst some passengers sit, some walk one way,

some another, some have their faces towards their journey's end, some their back turned upon it, this wise Pilot does most skilfully guide the ship to arrive with them all at His own glory. Happy they who propound and intend His glory as He Himself does, for in them shall the riches of His mercy be glorified! They who oppose him, lose this happiness, but He is sure not to lose His glory for all that, to wit, the glory of His justice. His right hand shall find out all His enemies. *Surely, the wrath of man shall praise Thee.*

The consideration of this truth, thus in some measure unfolded, may serve to justify the truly wise dispensation of God against our imaginary wisdom. Were the matter referred to our modelling, we should assign the Church constant peace and prosperity for her portion, and not consent that the least air of trouble should come near her; we would have no enemies to molest her, nor stir against her, or, if they did stir, we would have them to be presently repressed; and these, in our judgment, would be the fairest and most glorious tokens of *His* love and power whose spouse she is. But this carnal wisdom is *enmity against God*, and is opposed to the glory of God, which rises so often out of the wrath of His enemies. Had God caused Pharaoh to yield at the very first, to the release of His people, where had been the fame of those miraculous judgments in Egypt, and those mercies on the Israelites, the one setting out and illustrating the other? Where had been that name and honour which God says He would gain to Himself, and which he did gain out of Pharaoh's final destruction, making that stony-hearted king and his troops *sink like a stone in the waters*, as Moses sings? Observe his proud boastings immediately foregoing his ruin: *I will pursue*, says he, *I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied on them: I will draw my sword, and my hand shall destroy them.* Soon after, the sea quenches all this heat. Commonly, big threatenings are unhappy presages of very ill success. That historian [Herodotus] says well of God, *Deus neminem alium, quam seipsum, sinit de se mag-*

nificè sentire:—God suffers no other to think highly of himself, than Himself alone. And indeed, as He abhors these boastings, so He delights in the abasing of the lofty heart whence they flow, and it is His prerogative to gain praise to Himself out of their wrath. *Hast thou an arm like God?* says the Lord to Job, then, *look upon the proud and bring them low.* Job xl. 9. 12. When Sennacherib came up against Jerusalem, his blasphemies and boastings were no less vast and monstrous than the number of his men and chariots. Good Hezekiah turned over the matter unto God, spreading the letter of blasphemies before Him, upon which God undertook the war, and assured Hezekiah that the Assyrian should not so much as shoot an arrow against the city, but return the same way he came. 2 Kings xix. 33. And the deliverance there promised and effected, is conceived to have been the occasion of penning this very Psalm. Surely, when an angel did in one night slay 185,000 in their camps, that wrath and those threats tended exceedingly to the praise of the God of Israel. The hook that he put in Sennacherib's nostrils, (as the history speaks,) to pull him back again, was more remarkable than the fetters would have been, if He had tied him at home, or hindered his march with his army.

Who is he then that will be impatient because of God's patience, and judge Him slack in judgment, while the rage of the wicked prevails awhile? Know, that He is more careful of His own glory than we can be, and the greater height man's wrath arises to, the more honour shall arise to Him out of it. Did not his omnipotency shine brighter in the flames of that furnace into which the three children were cast, than if the king's wrath had been at first cooled? Certainly, the more both it and the furnace had their heat augmented, the more was God glorified. *Who is that God,* saith he blasphemously and proudly, *that can deliver you out of my hands?* Dan. iii. 15. A question, indeed, highly dishonouring the Almighty, but stay till the real answer come, and then, not only shall that wrath praise Him, but that very same tongue, though

inured to blasphemy, shall be taught to bear a main part in the confession of those praises. Let that apostate emperor [Julian] go taunting the Head, and tormenting the members, of that mystical body, his closing with Ἐνίκησας, Γαλιλαῖε, *Thou hast overcome, O Galilean,* (meaning Christ,) shall help to verify that, whether its course be shorter or longer, man's wrath ends always in God's praise. In like manner, the closing of the lions' mouth, spake louder to His praise who stopped them, than if He had stopped Daniel's enemies in the beginning of their wicked design. So hot was their rage, that the king's favourable inclination to Daniel, (of which, in other cases, courtiers used to be so devout observers,) yea, his contesting and pleading for him, did profit him nothing, but they hurried their king to the execution of their unjust malice, though themselves were convinced that nothing could be found against him, but only concerning *the law of his God.* Dan. vi. 5. It is said, ver. 14, that king Darius *set his heart on Daniel to deliver him, and he laboured to do it till the going down of the sun,* and then those counsellors and counsels of darkness overcame him. But upon this black night of their prevailing wrath, followed immediately a bright morning of praises to Daniel's God, when the lions that were so quiet company all night to Daniel, made so quick a breakfast of those accursed courtiers who had maliciously accused him. *Even so let thine enemies perish, O Lord, and let those that love Thee, be as the sun when he goes forth in his might!*

The other proposition concerns the limiting of this wrath: *The remainder of wrath Thou wilt restrain.*

To take no notice, for the present, of divers other readings of these words, the sense of them, as they are here very well rendered, may be briefly this: that whereas the wrath of man to which God gives way, shall praise Him, the rest shall be *curbed* and *bound up,* as the word is; no more of it shall break forth than shall contribute to His glory. Here should be considered divers ways and means by which God useth to stop the heady course of man's wrath, and hinder its proceeding any further;

but only, for the present, let us take out of it this lesson, That the most compendious way to be safe from the violence of men, is to be on terms of friendship with God.

Is it not an incomparable privilege, to be in the favour and under the protection of ONE, whose power is so transcendant that no enemy can so much as stir without His leave? Be persuaded then, Christian, in these dangers that are now so near us, every one to draw near to Him. Remove what may provoke Him. Let no reigning sin be found either in your cities or in your villages, for He is a holy God. Is it a time to multiply provocations now, or is it not rather high time to be humbled for the former? What shameless impiety is it, to be now licentious or intemperate, to be proud, to oppress or extort, to profane God's day, and blaspheme His name! All these sins, and many others, abound amongst us, and that avowedly. Without abundance of repentance for these, we shall smart, and the wrath of our enemies, though unjust in them, shall praise God in our just punishment; though, doubtless, he will own His Church, and be praised likewise in the final punishment of their wrath who rise against it. There is a remarkable expression in the ninety-ninth Psalm, of God's dealing with His people: *Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance on their inventions.* A good cause and a covenant with God, will not shelter an impenitent people from sharper correction. It is a sad word God speaks by His prophet to His own people: *I myself will fight against you.* Jer. xxi. 5. A dreadful enemy! and none, indeed, are truly dreadful but He. Oh! prevent His anger, and you are safe enough. If perverse sinners will not hear, yet, let those who are indeed Christians, mourn in secret, not only for their own sins, but let them bestow some tears likewise upon the sins of others. Labour to appease the wrath of God, and He will either appease man's wrath, or, howsoever, will turn it jointly to our benefit and His own glory. Let the fear of the most high God, who hath no less power of the strongest of His enemies than over the meanest of His ser-

vants; let His fear, I say, possess all our hearts, and it will certainly expel that ignoble and base fear of the wrath of man. See how the Prophet opposes them, Isa. viii. 12. *Fear not their fear*, says he, *nor be afraid; but sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread.* Fear not, yet fear. This holy fear begets the best courage: the breast that is most filled with it, abounds most in true magnanimity. Fear thus, that you may be confident, not in yourselves, though your policy and strength were great, *for cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm*, but confident in that God who is too wise and vigilant to be surprised, too mighty to be foiled, and too rich to be out-spent in provision; who can suffer His enemy to come to the highest point of apparent advantage, without any inconvenience, yea, with more renown in His conquest. And so, a Christian who is made once sure of this (as easily he may), is little careful about the rest. His love to God prevailing over all his affections, makes him very indifferent what becomes of himself or his dearest friends, so God may be glorified. What though many fall in the quarrel, (which God avert!) yet, it is sufficient that truth in the end shall be victorious. Have not the saints in all ages been content to convey pure religion to posterity, in streams of their own blood, not of others? Well, hold fast by this conclusion, that God can limit and bind up the most violent wrath of man, so that, though it swell, it will not break forth. The stiffest heart, as the current of the most impetuous rivers, is in His hand, to appoint its channels, and turn it as He pleaseth. Yea, it is He that hath shut up the very sea with bars and doors, and said, *Hitherto shalt thou come and no further, here shall thy proud waves be stayed.* Job xxxviii. 10, 11. To see the surges of a rough sea come in towards the shore, a man would think that they were hastening to swallow up the land; but they know their limits, and are beaten back into foam. *Though the waves thereof toss themselves*, as angry at their restraint, yet, the small sand is

a check to the great sea, *yet can they not prevail: though they roar, yet can they not pass over it.* Jer. v. 22.

The sum is this: what God permits His Church's enemies to do, is for His own further glory; and reserving this, there is not any wrath of man so great, but He will either sweetly calm it, or strongly restrain it. To Him be praise and dominion for ever.

SERMON XII.

Psalm cxii. 7.

He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.

All the special designs of men agree in this; they seek satisfaction and quietness of mind, that is, happiness. This, then, is the great question, Who is the happy man? It is here resolved, ver. 1. *Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth in his commandments.*

The blessedness is unfolded, like a rich landscape, that we may view the well-mixed colours, the story and tissue of it, through the whole *alphabet* in capital letters. And take all and set them together, it is a most full and complete blessedness, not a letter wanting to it*. Amongst the rest, that which we have in these words, is of a greater magnitude and brightness than many of the rest, *He shall not be afraid of evil things.*

* This Psalm, in the Hebrew, consists of twenty-two short verses, each of which begins with one of the letters of the alphabet in their order, till they are all ended. No one letter is here omitted, as is the case in the xxvth Psalm, where the same order is observed.

Well may the Psalm begin with a *Hallelujah*, a note of praise to Him in whom this blessedness lies. Oh, what a wretched creature were man, if not provided with such a portion! Without which there is nothing but disappointment, and thence the racking torment and vexation of a disquieted mind, still pursuing somewhat that he never overtakes.

The first words are the inscription, *The blessedness of that man*, &c. So the particulars follow; where outward blessings are so set, as that they look and lead higher, pointing at their end, the infinite goodness whence they flow, and whither they return and carry along with them this happy man.

And these promises of outward things are often evidently accomplished to the righteous, and their seed after them, and that, commonly, after they have been brought very low. But when it is otherwise with them, they lose nothing. It is good for *many*, yea, it is good for *all* the godly, that they should have less of these lower things, in order to raise their eye to look after higher,—the eye of *all*, both of those who are held somewhat short, and of those that have abundance in the world.

These temporal promises were more abounding, and more frequently fulfilled in their very kind, in the times of the Law; yet, still the right is constant, and all ages do give clear examples of the truth of this word. Where it is thus, it is a blessing created by its aspect to this promise, and so differs from the prosperity of ungodly men; and where it is otherwise with the righteous and their seed, it is no shift, but a most solid comfort, to turn their eyes to a higher compensation.

But howsoever it go with them, this still holds, *He shall not be afraid of evil tidings.* Notwithstanding the hardest news that can come to his ears, of any thing that concerns either himself, or his children, or the rest of God's children in his charge, in the world, *his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.*

First, let us take a view of the character of this blessed

man. Who is it that is thus undaunted? *The man that feareth God.*

All the passions are but several ebbings and flowings of the soul, and their motions are the signs of its temper, which way it is carried; *that* is mainly to be remarked by the beating of its pulse. If our desires, and hopes, and fears, be in the things of this world, and the interests of flesh, this is their distemper and disorder, the soul is in a continual fever. But if they move Godwards, then is it composed and calm, in a good temper and healthful state, fearing and loving Him, desiring Him, and nothing but Him, waiting for Him, and trusting in Him. And when any one affection is right and in a due aspect to God, all the rest are so too; for they are radically one. And He is the life of that soul which is united to Him; and so, in Him, it moves in a peculiar spiritual manner, as all do naturally in the dependence of their natural life on Him who is the Fountain of life.

Thus we have here this *fear of God*, as often elsewhere, set out as the very substance of holiness and evidence of happiness. And that we may know there is nothing either base or grievous in this fear, we have joined with it, *delight* and *trust: That delighteth greatly in His commandments:* which is that badge of love to Him, to observe them, and that with delight, and with exceeding great delight. So then, this fear is not that which love casts out, but that which love brings in. This fear follows and flows from love. It is a fear to offend, whereof nothing is so tender as love, and that, in respect of the greatness of God, hath in it withal a humble reverence. There is in all love a kind of reverence, a cautious and respective wariness towards the party loved; but especially in this, where not only we stand in a lower relation, as children to our Father, but the goodness which draws our love, doth infinitely transcend our measures and reach; therefore, there is a *rejoicing with trembling*, and an awful love, a *fearing the Lord and His goodness.* Hos. iii. 5. This is both *fear* and *trust.* The heart touched by the Spirit of God,

as the needle touched with the loadstone, looks straight and speedily to God, yet, still *with trembling*, being filled with this holy fear.

That delighteth. Oh! this is not only to do them, but to do them with delight: there is somewhat within that is connatural and symbolical with them. Yea, this very law itself is writ within, not standing as a hard task-master over our head, but impressed within, as a sweet principle in our hearts, and working from thence naturally. This makes a soul find pleasure in the purging out of sensual pleasures, and ease in doing violence to corrupt self, even undoing it for God, having no will but His. The remainders of sin and self in our flesh will be often rising up, but this predominant love dispels them. So, this fear works with delight.

And further, that we may know how serene and sweet a thing it is, it is here likewise joined with confidence, *trusting in the Lord;* a quickening confidence always accompanying it, and so, undoubtedly, it is a blessed thing. *Blessed is he that feareth. Fear* sounds rather quite contrary, hath an air of misery; but add, *whom? That feareth the Lord.* That touch turns it into gold. He that so fears, fears not: *He shall not be afraid.* All petty fears are swallowed up in this great fear, as a spirit inured with great things, is not stirred nor affected at all with small matters. And this great fear is as sweet and pleasing as those little fears are anxious and vexing. Secure of other things, he can say, If my God be pleased, no matter who is displeased. No matter who despise me, if He account me His. Though all forsake me, my dearest friends grow estranged, and look another way, if He reject me not, that is my only fear, and for that I am not perplexed; I know He will not. As they answered Alexander, when he sent to inquire what they most feared, thinking possibly they would have said, lest he should invade them, but their answer was, *We fear nothing but lest Heaven should fall upon us;* which they did not fear neither: so, a believer hath no fear but of the displeasure of Heaven, lest

the anger of God should fall upon him; he fears *that;* that is, accounts *that* only terrible: but yet, he doth not fear, doth not apprehend it will fall upon him, he is better persuaded of the goodness of his God. So this *fear* is still joined with *trust*, as here, so often elsewhere. Psal. xxxiii. 18, xl. 3, and cxlvii. 11.

There is no turbulency in this fear; it is calm and sweet. Even that most terrible evil, that which this fear properly apprehends and flies, *sin*, yet the fear of that goes not to a distraction. Though there is little strength, and many and great enemies, mighty *Anakims* of temptations from without, and corruptions within, and so, good reason for a holy, humble fear and self-distrust, yea, this should not beat us off: yet, it is most fit to put us on to trust in Him who is our strength. Courage! the day shall be ours. Though we may be often foiled and down, and sometimes almost at a hopeless point, yet, our *Head* is on high. He hath conquered for us, and shall conquer in us. Therefore, upon this confidence, so fear as not to fear. *Why should I fear in the days of evil*, says the Psalmist, *when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about?* Psal. xlix. 5. (Which I take is some grievous affliction, and that with a visage of punishment of sin: guiltiness is to be read in it, yet does he not fear.) If I *trusted in wealth*, and *boasted myself in the multitude of riches*, then that being in hazard, I must fear: leaning on that, it failing, I might fall. But this is my confidence, (ver. 15). *God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave, for he shall receive me.* Wealth cannot, but He can. It *buys* not a man out from his hand, but He *buys*, from *the hand of the grave;* so the word is. For the visible heavens even in their fall, and the dissolution of nature, would not affright a believer, *Si fractus illabatur orbis*, &c.

Alas! most persons have dull or dim apprehensions and shallow impressions of God; therefore they have little either of this *fear* or of this *trust.* God is not in all their thoughts, but how to compass this or that design, and if they miss one, then how to compass another: they are cast from one wave

upon another. And if at any time they attain their purpose, they find it but a wind, a handful of nothing, far from what they fancied it.

Oh, my brethren, my desire is, that the faces of your souls were but once turned about, that they were towards Him, looking to Him, continually fearing Him, delighting, trusting in Him, making Him your all. Can any thing so elevate and ennoble the spirit of a man, as to contemplate and converse with the pure, ever-blessed Spring and Father of Spirits? Beg that you may know Him, that He would reveal Himself to you; for otherwise, no teaching can make Him known. It is to light candles to seek the sun, to think to attain to this knowledge without His own revealing it. If He hide His face, who then may behold Him? Pray for this quickening knowledge, such a knowledge as will effectually work this happy *fear* and *trust*.

You who have attained any thing of it, desire and *follow on to know the Lord;* particularly, so that your hearts may repose on Him. So fear as that you may not fear. He would have our spirits calm and quiet; for when they are in a hurry and confusion, they are then fit for nothing: all within makes a jarring unpleasant noise, as of an instrument quite out of tune.

This fear of God is not, you see, a perplexing doubting, and distrust of His love: on the contrary, it is a fixed resting and trust on His love. Many who have some truth of grace, are, through weakness, filled with disquieting fears; but possibly, though they perceive it not, it may be in some a point of wilfulness, a little latent, undiscerned affectation of scrupling and doubting, placing much of religion in it. True, where the soul is really solicitous about its interest in God, that argues some grace; but being vexingly anxious about it, argues that grace is low and weak. A spark there is, even discovered by that smoke; but the great smoke still continuing, and nothing seen but it, argues there is little fire, little faith, little love.

And this, as it is unpleasant to thyself, so is it to God, as smoke to the eyes. What if one should be always questioning with his friend, whether he loved him or not, and upon every little occasion were ready to think he doth not, how would this disrelish their society together, though truly loving each other! The far more excellent way, and more pleasing both to ourselves and to God, were to resolve on humble trust, reverence, and confidence, being most afraid to offend, delighting to walk in His ways, loving Him and His will in all, and then, resting persuaded of His love, though He chastise us. And even though we offend Him, and see our offences in our chastisements, yet, He is good, *plenteous in redemption*, ready to forgive; therefore *let Israel trust and hope.* Psal. cxxx. 7. Let my soul roll itself on Him, and adventure there all its weight. He bears greater matters, upholding the frame of heaven and earth, and is not troubled nor burdened with it.

The heart of a man is not sufficient for self-support; therefore, naturally, it seeks out some other thing to lean and rest itself on. The unhappiness is, for the most part, that it seeks to things below itself; but these, being both so mean and so uncertain, cannot be a firm and certain stay to it. These things are not fixed themselves: how can they then fix the heart? Can a man have firm footing on a quagmire, or moving sands? Therefore, men are forced in these things, still to shift their seat, and seek about from one to another, still rolling and unsettled. The believer only hath this advantage; he hath a rest high enough and sure enough, out of the reach of all hazards. *His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.*

The basis of this happiness is, *He trusteth in the Lord.* So the *heart is fixed;* and so fixed, it *fears no ill tidings.*

This *trust* is grounded on the word of God, revealing the power and all-sufficiency of God, and withal His goodness, His offer of Himself to be the stay of souls, His commanding us to rest on Him. People wait on I know not what persuasions and assurances, but I know no other to build faith

on, than the word of promise, the truth and faithfulness of God opened up, His wisdom, and power, and goodness, as the stay of all those who, renouncing all other props, will venture on it, and lay all upon Him. *He that believes, sets to his seal that God is true*, John iii. 33; and so, he is sealed for God; his portion and interest are secured. *If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.* Isa. vii. 9.

This is the way to have peace and assurance, which many look for first, *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee.* Isa. xxvi. 3. So here, the heart is fixed by *trusting*.

Seek, then, clearer apprehensions of the faithfulness and goodness of God, hearts more enlarged in the notion of free grace, and the absolute trust due to it; thus shall they be more established and fixed in all the rollings and changes of the world.

His heart is fixed, or *prepared*, ready-dressed and in arms for all services, resolved not to give back, able to meet all adventures, and stand its ground. God is unchangeable, and therefore faith is invincible. That sets the heart on Him, fastens it there on the rock of eternity; then, let winds blow, and storms arise, it cares not.

This firm and close cleaving unto God hath in it of the affection which is inseparable from this trust, *love* joined with *faith*, and so, a hatred of all ways and thoughts that alienate and estrange from God, that remove and unsettle the heart. The holiest, wariest heart is surely the most believing and fixed heart. If a believer will adventure on any way of sin, he shall find that it will unfix him, and shake his confidence, more than ten thousand hazards and assaults from without. These are so far from moving, that they settle and fix the heart commonly more, causing it to cleave the closer and nearer unto God; but sinful liberty breeds disquiet, and disturbs all. Where sin is, there will be a storm: the wind within the bowels of the earth makes the earthquake.

Would you be quiet, and have peace within in troublous

times, keep near unto God, beware of anything that may interpose betwixt you and your confidence. *It is good for me*, says the Psalmist, *to be near God;* not only to draw near, but to keep near, to cleave to Him, and dwell in Him: so the word imports. Oh, the sweet calm of such a soul amidst all storms! Thus, once trusting and fixed, then no more fear: he is *not afraid of evil tidings*, not of any *ill-hearing*. Whatsoever sound is terrible in the ears of men—the noise of war, news of death, or even the sound of the trumpet in the last judgment—he hears all this undisquieted. Nothing is unexpected. Being once fixed on God, then the heart may put cases to itself, and suppose all things imaginable, the most terrible, and look for them; not troubled before trouble comes, with dark and dismal apprehensions, but satisfied in a quiet, unmoved expectation of the hardest things. Whatsoever it is, though particularly not thought on before, yet, the heart is not afraid of the news of it, because it is *fixed, trusting on the Lord.* Nothing can shake that foundation, nor dissolve that union; therefore no fear. Yea, this assurance stays the heart in all things, how strange and unforeseen soever to it. All are foreseen to my God on whom I trust, yea are fore-contrived and ordered by Him. This is the impregnable fortress of a soul. All is at the disposal and command of my God; my Father rules all: what need I fear?

Every one trusts to somewhat. As for honour, and esteem, and popularity, they are airy, vain things; but riches seem a more solid work and fence, yet, they are but a tower in conceit, not really. Prov. xviii. 11. *The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and as a high wall in his own conceit.* But (ver. 10) *the name of the Lord is a strong tower*, indeed. This is the thing that all seek, some *fence* and *fixing;* here it is. We call you not to vexation and turmoil, but *from* it; and, as St. Paul said, *Whom ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you.* Ye blindly and fruitlessly seek after the *shew*. The true aiming at this fixedness of mind will secure that, though they fall short, yet by the way

they will light on very pretty things that have some virtue in them, as they that seek the philosopher's stone. But the believer hath the *thing*, the secret itself of tranquillity and joy, and this turns all into gold, their iron chains into a crown of gold: *While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.* 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.

This is the blessed and safe estate of believers. Who can think they have a sad, heavy life? Oh! it is the only lightsome, sweet, cheerful condition in the world. The rest of men are poor, rolling, unstayed things, every report shaking them, as the leaves of trees are shaken with the wind; yea, lighter than so, as the chaff that the wind drives to and fro at its pleasure. Isa. vii. 2; Psal. i. 4. Would men but reflect and look in upon their own hearts, it is a wonder what vain, childish things the most would find there, glad and sorry at things as light as the toys of children, at which they laugh and cry in a breath. How easily is the heart puffed up with a thing or a word that pleaseth us, bladder-like, swelled with a little air; and it shrinks again in discouragements and fear, upon the touch of a needle's point, which gives that air some vent.

What is the life of the greatest part but a continual tossing betwixt vain hopes and fears? All their days are spent in these. Oh! how vain a thing is a man even in his best estate, while he is nothing but himself—while his heart is not united and fixed on God, and he is disquieted in vain. How small a thing will do it! He needs no other than his own heart; it may prove disquietment enough to itself; his thoughts are his tormentors.

I know some men are, by a stronger understanding and by moral principles, somewhat raised above the vulgar, and speak big of a constancy of mind; but these are but flourishes, an acted bravery. Somewhat there may be that will hold out in some trials, but it will fall far short of this fixedness of faith. Troubles may so multiply as to drive them at length from their posture, and may come on so thick, with such violent

blows, as will smite them out of their artificial guard, disorder all their Seneca and Epictetus, and all their own calm thoughts and high resolves. The approach of death, though they make a good mien, and set the best face on it, or if not, yet some kind of terror may seize on their spirits, which they are not able to shift off. But the soul trusting on God, is prepared for all; not only for the calamities of war, pestilence, famine, poverty, or death, but, when in the saddest apprehensions of soul, beyond hope, believes against hope; even in the darkest night, casts anchor in God, reposes on Him when he sees no light. Isa. l. 10. *Yea, though He slay me*, says Job, *yet will I trust on Him*—not merely though I die, but though *He* slay me: when I see His hand lifted up to destroy me, yet from that same hand will I look for salvation.

My brethren, my desire is, to stir up in your hearts an ambition after this blessed estate of the godly who fear the Lord, and trust in Him, and so fear no other thing. The common revolutions and changes of the world, and those which in these late times we ourselves have seen, and the likelihood of more and greater coming on, seem dreadful to weak minds. But let these persuade us the more to prize and seek this fixed, unaffrighted station; there is no fixing but here.

Oh! that you would be persuaded to break off from the vile ways of sin, which debase the soul, and fill it full of terrors, and to disengage them from the vanities of this world, to take up in God, to live in Him wholly, to cleave to and depend on Him, to esteem nothing beside Him! Excellent was the answer of that holy man to the Emperor, on his first essaying him with large proffers of honour and riches to draw him from Christ: *Offer these things*, says he, *to children, I regard them not.* Then, after he had tried to terrify him with threatening: *Threaten*, says he, *your effeminate courtiers; I fear none of these things.*

Seek to have your hearts established on Him by the faith

of eternal life, and then it will be ashamed to distrust Him in any other thing. Yea, truly, you will not much regard, nor be careful for other things how they be. It will be all one, the better and the worse of this *moment;* the things of it, even the greatest, being both in themselves so little and worthless, and of so short continuance.

Well, choose you; but, all reckoned and examined, I had rather be the poorest believer than the greatest king on earth. How small a commotion, small in its beginning, may prove the overturning of the greatest kingdom! But the believer is heir to a kingdom that cannot be shaken. The mightiest and most victorious prince, who hath not only lost nothing, but hath been gaining new conquests all his days, is stopped by a small distemper in the middle of his course; he returns to his dust, and then his vast designs fall to nothing. *In that very day his thoughts perish.* But the believer, in that very day, is sent to the possession of his crown: that is his coronation-day; all *his* thoughts are accomplished.

How can you affright him? Bring him word that his estate is ruined.—*Yet my inheritance is safe*, says he. "Your wife, or child, or dear friend, is dead."—*Yet my Father lives.* "You yourself must die."—Well, then, *I go home to my Father, and to my inheritance.*

For the public troubles of the Church, doubtless, it is both a pious and a generous temper to be more deeply affected for these than for all our private ones; and to be alive to the common calamities of any people, but especially of God's own people, hath been the character of men near unto Him. Observe the pathetical strains of the Prophet's bewailing, when they foretell the desolation even of foreign kingdoms, much more when foretelling that of the Lord's chosen people; they are still mindful of Sion, and mournful for her distresses. See Jer. ix. 1, and the whole Book of Lamentations. So the Psalmist: *If I forget thee, O Jerusalem*, &c. Psal. cxxxvii. 5. Pious spirits are always public-spirited, as even brave heathens were for the commonwealth. So he, in that passage

of Horace *: *Little regarding himself, but much solicitous for the public.* Yet even in this, with much compassion, there is a calm in a believer's mind. How these agree, none can tell but they who feel it. He finds amidst all hard news, yet still *a fixed heart, trusting*, satisfied in this, that deliverance shall come in due time (Psal. cii. 13), and that, in those judgments that are inflicted, man shall be humbled and God exalted (Isa. ii. 11; v. 16); and that in all tumults, and changes, and subversions of states, still His throne is fixed, and with that the believer's heart likewise. So Psal. xxix. 10: *The Lord sitteth upon the flood: yea, the Lord sitteth king for ever.* Or, *sat in the flood*, possibly referring to the general deluge; yet then God sat quiet, and still *sitteth king for ever.* He steered the ark, and still guides His Church through all. So Psalm xlvi., throughout that whole Psalm. In all commotions, the kingdom of Christ shall be spreading and growing, and the close of all shall be full victory on His side; and that is sufficient for the believer.

Of this, a singular example is in Job, who was not daunted with so many ill-hearings, but stood as an unmoved rock amidst the winds and waves: *Ille velut rupes immota manebat.*

In this condition there is so much sweetness, that, if known, a man might suspect himself to be rather selfishly taken with it, than to be purely loving God. Such joy in believing, or at least, such peace, such a serene calmness, is in no other thing in this world. Nothing either without or within a man is to be named with this trusting on His *goodness*, who is God, and on His *faithfulness*, who, giving His promise for thy warrant, commands thee to rely on Him. The holy soul still trusts under the darkest apprehensions. If it is suggested that thou art a reprobate, yet will the soul say, I will see the utmost, and hang by the hold I have, till I feel myself really cast off, and will not willingly fall off. If I must be sepa-

* Invenit insomni volventem publica curâ
Fata virûin, casusque urbis, cunctisque timentem,
Securumque sui.

rated from Him, He shall do it Himself; He shall shake me off while I would cleave to Him. Yea, to the utmost, I will look for mercy, and will hope better: though I found Him shaking me off, yet would I think He will not do it. It is good to seek after all possible assurance, but not to fret at the want of it; for even without those assurances which some Christians hang too much upon, there is in simple trust and reliance on God, and in a desire to walk in His ways, such a fortress of peace as all the assaults in the world are not able to make a breach in. And to this add that unspeakable delight in walking in His fear, joined with this trust. The noble ambition of pleasing Him makes one careless of pleasing or displeasing all the world. Besides, the delight in His commandments, in so pure, so just a law, holiness, victory over lusts, and temperance, hath a sweetness in it that presently pays itself, because it is agreeable to His will.

It is the godly man alone, who, by this fixed consideration in God, looks the grim visage of Death in the face with an unappalled mind, which damps all the joys, and defeats all the hopes of the most prosperous, proudest, and wisest worldlings. As Archimedes said, when shot, *Avocásti ab optima demonstratione*, so, it spoils all their figures and fine devices. But *to the righteous, there is hope in his death.* He goes through it without fear, without Caligula's *Quò vadis.* Though riches, honours, and all the glories of this world, are with a man, yet he fears; yea, he fears the more for these, because here they must end. But the good man looks death out of countenance, in the words of David: *Though I walk through the valley and shadow of death, yet will I fear no evil, for Thou art with me.* Psal. xxiii. 4.

SERMON XIII.

MATT. xiii. 3.

And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow.

THE rich bounty of God hath furnished our natural life, not barely for strict necessity, but with great abundance: many kinds of beasts, and fowls, and fishes, and herbs, and fruits, has He provided for the use of man. Thus our spiritual life likewise is supported with a variety: the word, the food of it, hath not only all necessary truths once simply set down, but a great variety of doctrine for our more abundant instruction and consolation. Amongst the rest, this way of similitudes hath a notable commixture of profit and delight.

Parables not unfolded and understood are a veil (as here) to the multitude, and in that view they are a great judgment (as Isaiah vi. 9, cited here); but when cleared and made transparent, then they are a glass to behold Divine things in, more commodiously and suitably to our way. All things are big with such resemblances, but they require the dexterous hand of an active spirit to bring them forth. This way, besides other advantages, is much graced and commended by our Saviour's frequent use of it.

That which is given here, is fitted to the occasion: multitudes were coming to hear him, and many were not a whit the better for it. He instructs us in this point, the great difference between the different hearts of men, so that the same word hath very different success in them.

In this parable we shall consider these three things:— 1. The nature of the word in itself. 2. The sameness and commonness of the dispensation. 3. The difference of the operation and production.

The word, the *seed*, hath in it a productive virtue to bring

forth fruit according to its kind, that is, the fruit of a *new life;* not only a new habitude and fashion of life without, but a new nature, a new kind of life within, new thoughts, a new estimate of things, new delights and actions. When the word reveals God, His greatness and holiness, then it begets pious fear and reverence, and study of conformity to Him. When it reveals His goodness and mercy, it works love and confidence. When it holds up to our view Christ crucified, it crucifies the soul to the world, and the world to it. When it represents those rich things which are laid up for us, that blessed inheritance of the saints, then it makes all the lustre of this world vanish, shews how poor it is, weans and calls off the heart from them, raising it to those higher hopes, and sets it on the project of a crown. And so it is a seed of noble thoughts and of a suitable behaviour in a Christian, as, in the exposition of this parable, it is called the *word of the kingdom; seed*, an *immortal seed*, as St. Peter calls it, 1 Pet. i. 23, springing up to no less than eternal life.

This teaches us, 1. Highly to esteem the great goodness of God to those places and times which have been most blessed with it. *He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation; and as for his judgments, they have not known them.* Psal. cxlvii. 19.

2. That the same dispensation is to be preached indifferently to all where it comes, as far as the sound can reach. And thus it was very much extended in the first promulgating of the gospel; *their sound went out through all the earth*, as the Apostle allusively applies that of the Psalmist. Rom. x. 18 —Psal. xix. 4.

3. This teaches also ministers liberally to sow this seed at all times, according to that, *In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand*, &c. (Eccl. xi. 6), praying earnestly to Him who is the Lord, not only of the harvest, but of the seed-time, and of this *seed*, to make it fruitful. This is His peculiar work. So the Apostle acknow-

ledges, *I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.* 1 Cor. iii. 6.

4. Hence we also learn the success to be very different. This is most evident in men: while one is cast into the mould and fashion of the word, and so moulded and fashioned by it, another is no whit changed; while one heart is melting before it, another is still hardened under it.

So then, this is not all, to have the word and to hear it, as if that would serve our turn and save us, as we commonly fancy, *The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we.* Multitudes under the continual sound of the word yet remain lifeless and fruitless, and die in their sins. Therefore, we must inquire and examine strictly what becomes of it, how it works, what it brings forth; and for this very end, this parable declares so many are fruitless. We need not press them—they are three to one here; yea, that were too narrow, the odds are far greater, for these are but the kinds of unfruitful grounds, and under each of these are comprised huge multitudes of individuals, so that there may be a hundred to one; and it is to be feared, that in many congregations it is more than so.

Whence is then the difference? Not from the seed; that is the same to all. Not from the sower neither, for though these be divers, and of different abilities, yet it hangs little or nothing on that. Indeed, he is the fittest to preach who is himself most like his message, and comes forth not only with a handful of this seed in his hand, but with store of it in his heart, the word *dwelling richly in him;* yet, howsoever, the seed he sows, being this word of life, depends not on his qualifications in any kind, either of common gifts or special grace. People mistake this much, and it is a carnal conceit to hang on the advantages of the minister, or to eye that much. The sure way is, to look up to God, and to look into thine own heart. An unchanged, unsoftened heart, like an evil soil, disappoints the fruit. What though sown by a weak hand, yea, possibly a foul one, yet, if received into a clean and

honest heart, it will fructify much. There is in the world a needless and prejudicial distinguishing of men, out of which people will not come for all we can say.

The first bad ground is a *highway*. Now we have a commentary here, whence we may not, and will not depart: it is authentic and full. It is those who hear the word and *understand it not*. Ver. 19. Gross, brutish spirits who perceive not what is said, are as if they were not there, sit like blocks, one log of wood upon another; as he said, *Lapis super lapidem in theatro*. This is our brutish multitude. What pity is it to see so many, such as have not so much as a natural apprehension of spiritual truths! Their hearts are the *common road* of all passengers, of all kinds of foolish, brutish thoughts; seeking nothing but how to live, and yet they know not to what end, have no design; trivial, *highway* hearts, which all temptations pass through at their pleasure; *profane as Esau*, which some critics draw from a word signifying the *threshold*, the outer step that every foul foot treads on.

These retain nothing; there is no hazard of that: and yet, the Enemy of souls, to make all sure, lest peradventure some word might take root unawares, some grain of this seed, is busy to pick it away; to take them off from all reflection, all serious thoughts, or the remembrance of anything spoken to them. And if any common word is remembered, yet it doth no good, for that is trodden down like the rest; though the most is picked up, because it lies on the road. So it is expressed, Mark iv. 4.

The second is *stony ground;* hard hearts, not softened and made penetrable to receive in deeply this ingrafted word with meekness, with humble yielding and submission to it; the *rocks*. Yet, in these, there is often some receiving of it, and a little slender moisture above them, which the warm air may make spring up a little: they *receive with joy*, have a little present delight in it, are moved and taken with the sermon, possibly even to the shedding of some tears; but the misery is, there is a want of depth of earth, it sinks not.

No wonder if there is some present delight in these. Therefore, the *word of the kingdom*, especially if skilfully and sensibly delivered by some more able speaker, pleases. Let it be but a fancy, yet it is a fine pleasant one; such love as induced the Son of God to die for sinners; such a rich purchase made as a kingdom; such glory and sweetness. Therefore the description of the new Jerusalem, Rev. xxi., suppose it to be but a dream, or one of the visions of the night, yet it is passing fine; it must needs please a mind that heeds what is said of it. There is a *natural* delight in spiritual things, and thus the word of the Prophet, as the Lord tells him (Ezek. xxxiii. 32), was as a minstrel's voice, a fine song so long as it lasted, but which dies out in the air. It may be, the relish and air of it will remain awhile in the imagination, but not long; even that wears out and is forgotten. So here, it is *heard with joy*, and some is *springing up* presently: they commend it, and, it may be, repeat some passages, yea, possibly desire to be like it, to have such and such graces as are recommended, and upon that think they have them, are presently good Christians in their own conceit. And to appearance, some change is wrought, and it appears to be all that it is; but it is not deep enough. They talk, possibly, too much, more than those whose hearts receive it more deeply: there it lies hid longer, and little is heard of it; others may think it is lost, and, possibly, themselves do not perceive that it is there: they are exercised and humbled at it, and find no good in their own hearts; yet there it is hid: as David says, *Thy word have I hid in my heart.* And as seed in a manner dies in a silent, smothering way, yet, it is in order to the fructifying and the reviving of it, so it will spring up in time, and be *fruitful* in its season—*with patience*, as St. Luke hath it of the good ground; not so suddenly, but much more surely and solidly.

But the most are present, mushroom Christians, soon ripe, soon rotten. The seed goes never deep: it springs up indeed, but anything blasts and withers it. There is little root in some. If trials arise, either the heat of *persecution* without,

or a *temptation* within, this sudden spring-seed can stand before neither.

Oh, rocky hearts! How shallow, shallow, are the impressions of Divine things upon you! Religion goes never further than the upper surface of your hearts. You have but few deep thoughts of God, and of Jesus Christ, and the things of the world to come; all are but slight and transient glances.

The third is, *thorny ground*. This relates to the cares, and pleasures, and all the interests of this life. See Mark iv. 1; and Luke viii. 5. All these together are the *thorns*. And these grow in hearts which do more deeply receive the seed, and send it forth, and in which it springs up more hopefully than in either of the other two, and yet they choke it. Oh, the pity!

Many are thus almost at heaven; there is so much desire of renovation, and some endeavours after it, and yet the thorns prevail. Miserable thorns, the base things of a perishing life, drawing away the strength of affections, sucking the sap of the soul! Our other seed and harvest, our corn and hay, our shops and ships, our tradings and bargains, our suits and pretensions for places and employments of gain or credit, husband or wife, and children, and house, and train, our feastings and entertainments, and other pleasures of sense, our civilities and compliments, and a world of those in all the world, are these *thorns*, and they overspread all: *The lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life.*

And for how long is all the advantage and delight of these? Alas! that so poor things should prejudice us against the rich and blessed increase of this Divine seed!

The last is, *good ground, a good and honest heart.* There is not much fineness here, not many questions and disputes, but honest simplicity, sweet sincerity, that is all; a humble, single desire to eye and to do the will of God, and this from love to Himself. This makes the soul abound in the *fruits* of holiness, receiving the word as the ground of it. Different degrees there are indeed, *some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred fold;* yet, the lowest are aiming at the highest, not

resting satisfied, still growing more fruitful; if thirty last year, desiring to bring forth sixty this.

This is the great point, and we ought to examine it; for much is sown, and little brought forth. Our God hath done much for us—(what more could be done?)—yet, when grapes were expected, wild grapes are produced. What becomes of all? Who grow to be more spiritual, more humble and meek, more like Christ, more self-denying, fuller of love to God and one to another! Some, but, alas! how few. All the land is sown, and that plentifully, with the good seed; but what comes for the most part? Cockle, and no grain. *Infelix lolium.*

We would do all other things to purpose, and not willingly lose our end: we would not trade and gain nothing, buy and sell, and live by the loss; we would not plough and sow, and reap nothing. How sensibly do we feel one ill year! And shall *this* alone be lost labour, which, well improved, were worth all the rest? Oh! how much more worth than all! Shall we do only the greatest business to the least purpose? Bethink yourselves, what do we here? Why come we here? If we still remain as proud and passionate, as self-willed as before, what will all great bargains, and good years, and full barns, avail within a while? That word, *Thou fool, this night shall they fetch away thy soul*, how terrible will it be!

We think we are wise in not losing our labour in other things; why, it is all lost, even where most is gained. What amounts it to, when cast up? *Vanity and vexation of spirit* is the total sum. And in all our projecting and bustling, what do we but *sow the wind*, and *reap the whirlwind;* sow *vanity*, and reap *vexation?*

This seed alone, being fruitful, makes rich and happy, springs up to *eternal life.* Oh! that we were wise, that we would at length learn to hear every sermon as on the utmost edge of time, at the very brink of eternity! For anything we know for ourselves, of any of us it may be really so. However, it is wise and safe to do as if it were so. Will you be

persuaded of this? It were a happy sermon, if it could prevail for the more fruitful hearing of all the rest henceforward. We have lost too much of our little time; and thus, with the Apostle, *I beseech you, I beseech you, receive not the grace of God in vain.*

Now, that you may be fruitful, examine well your own hearts; pluck up, weed out, for there are still thorns. Some will grow; but he is the happiest man who hath the sharpest eye and the busiest hand, spying them out, and plucking them up. *Take heed how you hear:* think it not so easy a matter. *Plough up, and sow not among thorns.* Jer. iv. 3.

And above all, pray, pray before, after, and in hearing. Dart up desires to God. He is the Lord of the harvest, whose influence doth all. The difference of the soil makes indeed the difference of success: but the Lord hath the privilege of bettering the soil. He who framed the heart, changes it when and how he will. There is a curse on all grounds naturally, which fell on the earth for man's sake, but fell more on the ground of man's own heart within him: *Thorns and briars shalt thou bring forth.* Now it is He that denounceth that curse, who alone hath power to remove it. He is both the sovereign owner of the seed, and the changer of the soil; He turns a wilderness into Carmel by His Spirit; and no ground no heart, can be good till He change it.

And, being changed, much care must be had still in manuring; for still that is in it which will bring forth many weeds, is a mother to them, and but a step-mother to this seed. Therefore,

Consider it, if you think this concerns you. *He that hath an ear to hear,* as our Saviour closes, *let him hear.* The Lord apply your hearts to this work; and though discouragements should arise without, or within, and little present fruit appear, but corruption is rather stronger and greater, yet, watch and pray. Wait on; it shall be better. This fruit is to be brought forth *with patience,* as St. Luke hath it. And this *seed,* this *word,* the Lord calls by that very

name, the very *word of His patience.* Keep it, hide it in thy heart, and in due time it shall spring up. And this patience shall be put to it but for a little while. The day of harvest is at hand, when all who have been in any measure fruitful in grace, shall be gathered into glory.

SERMON XIV.

2 Cor. vii. 1.

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

It is a thing both of unspeakable sweetness and usefulness, for a Christian often to consider the excellency of that estate to which he is called. It cannot fail to put him upon very high resolutions, and carry him on in the Divine ambition of behaving daily more suitably to his high calling and hopes. Therefore, these are often set before Christians in the Scriptures, and are pressed here by the Apostle upon a particular occasion, the avoidance of near combinements with unbelievers. He mentions some choice promises which God makes to His own people, and speaks of their near relation to, and communion with, Himself; and upon these, he enlarges and raises the exhortation to the universal endeavour of all holiness, and that as aiming at the very top and highest degree of it.

In the words are, 1. The thing to which he would persuade 2. The motive.

1. The thing is, *holiness* in its full extension and intention. *Purging ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit,* and *perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

The purging out of filthiness, and the perfecting of holi-

ness, express those two parts of renewing grace, *mortification* and *vivification*, as usually they are distinguished. But I conceive they are not so truly different parts, as a different notion of the same thing, the decrease of sin and the increase of grace, being truly one thing, as are the dispelling of darkness and the augmenting of light. So here, the one is rendered as the necessary result, yea as the equivalent of the other, as the same thing indeed: *purging from filthiness*, and, in so doing, *perfecting holiness: perfecting holiness*, and, in so doing, *purging from filthiness*. By *perfection* is meant a growing, progressive advance towards perfection.

The words, without straining, give us as it were the several dimensions of holiness. The *breadth—cleansing from all filthiness;* the *length*, parallel to man's composition, running all along through his soul and body,—from all *filthiness of the flesh and spirit;* the *height—perfecting holiness;* the *depth*, that which is the bottom whence it rises up,—a deep impress of the fear of God, *perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

Let us cleanse ourselves.] It is the Lord who is the sanctifier of His people; He *purges away their dross and tin*, He *pours clean water*, according to His promises; yet, doth He call to us to cleanse ourselves. Even, *having such promises, let us cleanse ourselves.* He puts a new life into us, and causes us to act, and excites us to excite it and call it up into act in the progress of sanctification. Men are strangely inclined to a perverse construction of things. Tell them that we are to act and work, and to *give all diligence*, then they would fancy a doing in their own strength, and be their own saviours. Again, tell them that God works all our works in us, and for us, then they would take the ease of doing nothing: if they cannot have the praise of doing all, they will sit still with folded hands, and use no diligence at all. But this is the corrupt logic of the flesh, its base sophistry. The Apostle reasons just contrary, Phil. ii. 12. *It is God that worketh in us, both to will and do;—therefore*, would a carnal heart say, we need not work, or at least, may work

very carelessly. But *he* infers, *Therefore let us work out our own salvation with fear and trembling*, that is, in the more humble obedience to God, and dependence on Him; not obstructing the influence of His grace, and by sloth and negligence provoking Him to withdraw or abate it. Certainly, many in whom there is *truth* of grace, are kept low in the *growth* of it, by their own slothfulness, sitting still, and not bestirring themselves, and exercising the proper actions of that spiritual life by which it is entertained and advanced.

From all filthiness.] All kinds of sinful pollutions. Not as men commonly do, reform some things, and take to themselves dispensations in others, at least in some *one* peculiar sin, their *mistress*, their *Herodias*, or their *Delilah:* no parting with that; yea, they rather forego many other things, as a kind of composition for the retaining of it.

Of flesh and spirit.] The *whole* man must be purified and consecrated to God; not only refined from the gross outward acts of sin, but from the inward affection to it, and from the secret motions of it, that so the heart, *like a weaned child*, (Psal. cxxxi. 2) go not after it, which when restrained from the outward commission of sin, it may do, and very often does; as the Israelites *lusted after the flesh pots*, their hearts remained in Egypt still, though their bodies were brought out. This, then, is to be done; affection to sin is to be purged out. That is, we are to cleanse the *ground;* not only to lop off the branches, but to dig about, and loosen and pluck up the root. Though still fibres of it will stick, yet we ought still to be finding them out, and plucking them up.

Further, this applies not only to the inner part of all sins, but to some sins that are almost or wholly inward, that hang not so much on the body, nor are acted by it; those *filthinesses of the spirit* which are less easily discerned than those of the flesh, and, as more hardly discerned, so, when discerned, more hardly purged out: *pride*, *self-love*, *unbelief*, *curiosity*, &c., which, though more retired and refined sins, yet, are

pollutions and defilements, yea, of the worst sort, as being more spiritual, *filthiness of the spirit.* Fleshly pollutions are things of which the devils are not capable in themselves, though they excite men to them, and so they are called unclean spirits. But the highest rank of sins, are those that are properly *spiritual wickednesses.* These in men are the chief strengths of Satan, the inner works of his forts and *strongholds.* 2 Cor. x. 4. Many who are not much tempted to the common gross sensualities, who have, possibly, though an inclination to them, yet a kind of disdain of them, and through education, and morality, and strength of reason, with somewhat of natural conscience, are carried above them, yet have many of those *heights* the Apostle speaks of, those lofty *imaginations* that rise against God and *the obedience of Christ,* all which must be demolished.

Perfecting holiness.] Not content with low measures, with just so much as keeps from hell, but aspiring toward perfection; aiming high at self-victory, self-denial, and the love of God becoming purer and hotter, like a fire, growing and flaming up, and consuming the earth. Though men fall short of their aim, yet, it is good to aim high: they shall shoot so much the higher, though not full so high as they aim. Thus we ought to be setting the state of perfection in our eye, resolving not to rest content below that, and to come as near it as we can, even before we come at it. *Not as though I had already attained,* says the Apostle, *but this one thing I do; forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those which are before, I press towards the mark.* Phil. iii. 11, 12. This is to act as one who hath such a hope, such a state in view, and is still advancing towards it.

In the fear of God.] There is no working but on firm ground; there are no solid endeavours in holiness where it is not founded in a deeply-felt reverence of God, a desire to please Him and to be like Him, which springs from love. This, most men are either wholly strangers to, or are but

slight and shallow in it, and therefore make so little true progress in holiness.

2. Then there is the motive. *Having these promises.* Being called to so fair an estate, so excellent a condition, to be the people, yea, the sons and daughters of God, therefore they are called to the *coming forth* from *Babel,* and the separating themselves from sin, and purging it out. Holiness is His image in His children: the more there is of it, the more suitable are they to that blessed relation and dignity, and the firmer are their hopes of the inheritance of glory.

Consider sin as a filthiness; hate it. Oh, how ugly and vile is lust, how deformed is swelling pride! And all sin is an aversion from God, a casting of the noble soul into the mire, the defacing of all its beauty. Turning to present things, it pollutes itself with them: he who is *clad in scarlet, embraces the dunghill,* as Jeremiah in another sense laments.

The purity of things is, an *unmixture* and *simplicity* corresponding with their own being; and such is the purity of the soul when elevated above the earth and sense, and united unto God, contemplating Him, and delighting in Him. All inordinate bent to the creatures, or to itself, (which is the first and main disorder,) doth defile and debase it. And the more it is sublimed and freed from itself, the purer and more heavenly it grows, and partakes the more of God, and resembles Him the more.

This, then, is to be our main study: first, to search out our iniquities, the particular defilements of our nature; not only gross filthiness, drunkenness, lasciviousness, &c., but our love of this earth, or of *air,* our vanity of mind, our self-will and self-seeking. Most persons, even most Christians, are short sighted in respect to their own secret evils, the *filthinesses of the spirit* especially, and use little diligence in this inquiry. They do not seek light from God, to go in before Him, and to lead them into themselves, as the Prophet had in the discovery of idolatries at Jerusalem. Oh! that

we could once see what heaps of abominations lie hid in us one behind another!

Then, having searched out, we must follow on to purge out: we are not to pass over, nor to spare any, but to delight most in casting out the best beloved sin, the choicest idol, that hath had most of our service and sacrifices, to make room for Jesus Christ.

And never cease in this work, for still there is need of more purifying. One day's work in this, disposes for and engages to a further, to the next; for, as sin is purged out, light comes in, and more clear discoveries are made of remaining pollutions. So then, still there must be progress, less of the world, and more of God in the heart every day. Oh! this is a sweet course of life. What gain, what preferment is to be compared to it?

And in this, it is good to have our ambition growing; the higher we rise, to aspire still the higher, looking further than before, even toward the perfection of holiness. It is not much we can here attain to, but surely, it is commonly far less than we might; we improve not our condition and advantages as we might do. The world are busy driving forwards their designs. Men of spirit are animated both by better and by worse success: if anything miscarry, it sets them on the more eagerly to make it up, in the right management of some other design; and when they prosper in one thing, that enables and encourages them to attempt further. Shall all other things seem worth our pains? Are only grace and glory so cheap in our account, that the least diligence of all goes that way? Oh, strange delusion!

Now, our cleansing is to be managed by all holy means: the *word* and *sacrament* more wisely and spiritually used than commonly they are with us; and *private prayer*, which purifies and elevates the soul, takes it up into the mount, and makes it shine; and particularly, supplicating for the Spirit of holiness and for victory over sin, is not in vain;—the soul obtains its desires of God, becoming that which it is fixedly

set upon; *holy resolution;*—Christians are much wanting in this, are faint and loose in their purposes;—the *consideration of Divine truths,* the mysteries of the kingdom, the hope of Christians, yea, rich and great promises, that is particularly here the motive:—these are all the means, and holy means they are, as their end is the perfection of holiness.

Having these promises.] Now, consider whether it is better to be the slaves of Satan, or the sons of God. Measure delight in God, with the low, base pleasures of sense. *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God:* these gradually go on together, and are perfected together.

Why, then, is there such an invincible love of sin in the hearts of men? At least, why so little love of holiness, and endeavour after it, so mean thoughts of it, as a thing either indecent or unpleasant, when it is the only noble and the only delightful thing in the world? The soul by other things is drawn below itself, but by holiness it is raised above itself, and made Divine. The pleasures of sin are for a season: they are the pleasures of a moment exchanged for those of eternity. But even in the mean time, in this season, the holy soul is fed with communion with God, one hour of which is more worth than the longest life of the highest of the world's delights.

SERMON XV.

PSALM cxix. 32.

I will run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou shalt enlarge my heart.

To desire ease and happiness, under a general representation of it, is a thing of more easy and general persuasion; there is somewhat in nature to help the argument. But to find beauty in, and be taken with, the very *way* of holiness

that leads to it, is more rare, and depends on a higher principle. *Self-love* inclines a man to desire the *rest of love*, but to love and desire *the labour of love*, is love of a higher and purer strain. To delight and be cheerful in obedience, argues much love as the spring of it. That is the thing the holy Psalmist doth so plentifully express in this Psalm, and he is still desiring more of that sweet and lively affection that might make him yet more abundant in action. Thus here, *I will run*, &c. He presents his desire and his purpose together, q. d., The more of this grace Thou bestowest on me, the more service shall I be able to do Thee.

This is the top of his ambition, while others are seeking to enlarge their barns, their lands or estates, or their titles: and kings, to enlarge their territories or authority, to encroach on neighbouring kingdoms, or be more absolute in their own; instead of all such *enlargements*, this is David's great desire, *an enlarged heart to run the way of God's commandments*.

And these *other* (how big soever they sound) are poor narrow desires: this *one* is larger and higher than them all, and gives evidence of a heart already large. But as it is miserable in *those* desires, so it is happy in *this*, that *much* would still have *more*.

Let others seek more *money*, or more *honour*, Oh! the blessed choice of that soul that is still seeking more *love to God*, more affection, and more ability to do Him service; that counts all days and hours for lost, which are not employed to this improvement; that hears the word in public, and reads it in private for this purpose, to kindle this love, or to blow the spark, if any there be already in the heart, to raise it to a clear flame, and from a little flame to make it burn yet hotter and purer, and rise higher; but above all means, is often presenting *this* in prayer to Him on whose influence all depends, in whose hand our hearts are, much more than in our own. It follows Him with this desire, and works on Him by His own interest. Though there can be really no

accession of gain to Him by our services, yet He is pleased so to account with us as if they were. Therefore we may urge this: Lord, give more, and receive more: *I will run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou shalt enlarge my heart.*

We have here in the words, a required *disposition*, and a suitable *resolution*. The *disposition* relates to the *resolution*, as the means of fulfilling it; and the *resolution* relates to the *disposition*, both as the end of desiring it, and as the motive of obtaining it. The *resolution* occurs first in the words,—

I will run, &c.] The *way* resolved on, is that of *God's commandments;* not the road of the polluted world, not the crooked ways of his own heart, but the high-way, the royal way, the straight way of the kingdom, and that in the notion of subjection and obedience, *the way of Thy commandments.* This, Man naturally struggles against, and repines at. To be limited and bounded by a law, is a restraint; and vain man could possibly find in his heart to do many of the same things that are commanded, but he would not be tied, would have his liberty, and do it of his own choice. This is the *enmity of the carnal mind* against God, as the Apostle expresses it: *it is not subject to the law of God, neither can it be;* it breaks these bonds, and casts away the cords of his authority. This is sin, the transgression of the law; and this made the first sin so great, though in a matter one would think small, the eating of the fruit of a tree: it was rebellion against the majesty of God, casting off his law and authority, and aspiring to an imagined self-deity. And this is still the treasonable pride, or independency, and wickedness of our nature, rising up against God who formed us of nothing.

And this is the power and substance of religion, the new impress of God upon the heart, obedience and resignment to Him. To be given up to Him as entirely His, to be moulded and ordered as He will, to be subject to His laws and appointments in all things, to have every action, and every

word, under a rule and law, and the penalty to be so high, eternal death; all this, to a carnal or haughty mind, is hard. Not only every action and every word, but even every thought too, must be subject; the soul is not so much as thought-free. *Every thought is brought into captivity*, as the Apostle speaks, 2 Cor. x. 5; and so the licentious mind accounts it. Not only the affections and desires, but the very reasonings and *imaginations* are brought under this law.

Now, to yield this as reasonable and due to God; to own His sovereignty, and to acknowledge the law to be *holy, just, and good;* to approve, yea, to love it, even where it most contradicts and controls our own corrupt will and the law of sin in our flesh; this is true spiritual obedience;—to study and inquire after the will of God in all our ways, what will please Him, and, having found it, to follow that which is here called the *way of His commandments;* to make this *our* way, and our business in the world, and all other things but accessories and by-works, even those lawful things that may be taken in, and used as helps in our way; as the disciples passing through the corn, plucked the ears, and did eat in passing, as a by-work, but their business was to follow their Master. And whatsoever would hinder us in this way must be watched and guarded against. To effect that, we must either remove and thrust it aside, or, if we cannot do that, yet, we most go over it, and trample it under foot, were it the thing or the person that is dearest to us in the world. Till the heart be brought to this state and purpose, it is either wholly void of, or very low and weak in the truth of, religion.

We place religion much in our accustomed performances, in coming to church, hearing and repeating of sermons, and praying at home, keeping a road of such and such duties. The *way of God's commandments* is more in *doing* than in *discourse*. In many, religion evaporates itself too much out by the tongue, while it appears too little in their *ways*.

Oh! but this is the main: one act of charity, meekness or humility, speaks more than a day's discourse. All the means we use in religion, are intended for a further end, which if they attain not, they are nothing. This end is, to mortify and purify the heart, to mould it to the way of God's commandments in the whole track of our lives; in our private converse one with another, and our retired secret converse with ourselves, to have God still before us, and His law our rule in all we do, that He may be our meditation day and night, and that His law may be our *counsellor*, as this Psalm hath it; to regulate all our designs and the works of our callings by it; to walk *soberly, and godly, and righteously in this present world;* to curb and cross our own wills where they cross God's; to deny ourselves our own humour and pride, our passions and pleasures, to have all these subdued and brought under by the power of the law of love within us;—this, and nothing below this, is the end of religion. Alas! amongst multitudes who are called Christians, some there may be who speak and appear like it, yet how few are there who make this their business, and aspire to this, *the way of God's commandments!*

His intended course in this way the Psalmist expresses by *running*. It is good to be in this way even in the slowest motions. Love will *creep*, where it cannot *go*. But if thou art so indeed, then thou wilt long for a swifter motion. If thou do but creep, be doing, creep on, yet, desire to be enabled to go. If thou goest, but yet, halting and lamely, desire to be strengthened to walk straight; and if thou walkest, let not that satisfy thee, desire to *run*. So here, David did *walk* in this way, but he earnestly wishes to mend his pace; he would willingly *run*, and for that end he desires an *enlarged heart*.

Some dispute and descant too much whether they go or not, and childishly tell their steps, and would know at every pace whether they advance or not, and how much they

advance, and thus amuse themselves, and spend the time of doing and going, in questioning and doubting. Thus it is with many Christians. But it were a more wise and comfortable way, to be endeavouring onwards, and, if thou make little progress, at least to be desiring to make more; to be praying and walking, and praying that thou mayest walk faster, and that in the end thou mayest run; not to be satisfied with any thing attained, but yet, by that unsatisfiedness, not to be so dejected as to sit down, or stand still, but rather excited to go on. So it was with St. Paul, Philip. iii. 13. *Forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press forward.* If any one thinks that he hath done well and run far, and will take a pause, the great Apostle is of another mind: *Not as if I had already attained.* Oh, no! far from that, he still sets forward, as if nothing were done: like a runner, not still looking back to see how much he hath run, but forward to what he is to run, *stretching forth* to that, inflamed with frequent looks at the mark and end. Some are retarded by looking on what is past, as not satisfied: they have done nothing, as they think, and so, stand still discontented. But even in that way, it is not good to look too much to things behind: we must forget them rather, and press onwards.

Some, if they have gone on well, and possibly run for a while, yet, if they fall, then they are ready, in a desperate malecontent, to lie still, and think all is lost; and in this peevish fretting at their falls, some men please themselves, and take it for repentance, whereas indeed it is not that, but rather pride and humour. Repentance is a more submissive, humble thing. But this is what troubles some men at their new falls, (especially if after a long time of even walking or running,) they think their project is now spoiled, their thoughts are broken off: they would have had somewhat to have rejoiced in, if they had still gone on to the end, but being disappointed of that, they think they had as good let

alone, and give over. Oh! but the humble Christian is better taught: his falls teach him indeed to abhor himself; they discover his own weakness to him, and empty him of self-trust; but they do not dismay him to get up and go on, not boldly and carelessly forgetting his fall, but in the humble sense of it, walking the more warily, yet not the less swiftly; yea, the more swiftly too, making the more haste to regain the time lost by the fall. So then, if you would run in this way, depend on the strength of God, and on His Spirit leading thee, that so thou mayest not fall. And yet, if thou dost fall, arise, and, if thou art plunged in the mire, go to the Fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, and wash there; bemoan thyself before thy Lord; and if hurt and bleeding by thy fall, yet, look to Him, desire Jesus to pity thee, and bind up and cure thy wound, washing off thy blood, and pouring in of his own.

However it is with thee, give not over, faint not, run on. And that thou mayest run the more easily and expeditely, make thyself as light as may be, *lay aside every weight.* Heb. xii. 1, 2. Clog not thyself with unnecessary burdens of earth, and especially lay aside that which, of all things, weighs the heaviest, and cleaves the closest, *the sin that so easily besets us*, and is so hardly put off us, that folds so connaturally to us, and we therefore think will not hinder us much. And not only the sins that are more outward, but the inner, close-cleaving sins, the sin that most of all sits easily to us; not only our cloak, but our inner coat, away with that too, as our Saviour says in another case; and *run the race set before us*, our appointed stage, and that *with patience*, under all oppositions and discouragements from the world without, and from sin within. And to encourage thee in this, look to such a *cloud of witnesses*, that compasseth us about to further us, as troubles, temptations, and sin, do to hinder us. *They* encountered the like sufferings, and were encumbered with the like sins; and yet, they ran on, and got home. Alexander would have run in the *Olympic* games

if he had had kings to run with: now, in this race, kings, and prophets, and righteous persons, run; yea, all are indeed a *kingly generation*, each one heir to a crown as the *prize* of this race.

And if these encourage thee but little, then, *look* beyond them, above that cloud of witnesses, to the *sun*, the *Sun of Righteousness;* looking off from all things here, that would either entangle thee or discourage thee, taking thine eye off from them, and looking to Him who will powerfully draw thee and animate thee. *Look to Jesus*, not only as thy *forerunner* in this race, but also, as thy *undertaker* in it, *the author and finisher of our faith.* His attaining the end of the race, is the pledge of thy attaining, if thou follow him cheerfully on the same encouragements that he looked to: *Who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, and despised the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of God.*

When Thou shalt enlarge my heart.] In all beings, the heart is the principle of motion, and according as it is more or less perfect in its kind, those motions which flow from it are more or less vigorous. Therefore hath the Psalmist good reason, to the end his spiritual course may be the steadfaster and the faster, to desire that the principle of it, *the heart*, may be more enabled and disposed, which here he expresses by its being *enlarged.*

What this *enlargement of the heart* is, a man's own inward sense should easily explain to him. Surely it would, did men reflect on it, and were they acquainted with their own hearts; but the most are not. They would find the carnal natural heart, a narrow, contracted, hampered thing, bound with cords and chains of its own twisting and forging, and so incapable of *walking*, much less of *running*, in this way of God's commandments, till it be freed and enlarged.

The heart is taken generally in Scripture for the whole soul, the *understanding* and the *will*, in its several affections and motions; and the phrase being here of an *enlarged*

heart, it seems very congruous to take it in the most enlarged sense.

It is said of Solomon, that he had a *large heart*, (the same word that is here,) *as the sand of the sea-shore*, 1 Kings iv. 29; that is, a vast comprehensive spirit, that could fathom much of nature, both its greater and lesser things. *He spake of trees, from the cedar in Lebanon, to the hyssop in the wall, and of great beasts, and small creeping things.* Thus, I conceive, the *enlargement of the heart* compriseth the enlightening of the understanding. There arises a clearer light there, to discern spiritual things in a more spiritual manner; to see the vast difference betwixt the vain things the world goes after, and the true, solid delight that is in the *way of God's commandments;* to know the false blush of the pleasures of sin, and what deformity is under that painted mask, and not be allured by it; to have enlarged apprehensions of God. His excellency, and greatness, and goodness; how worthy he is to be obeyed and served. This is the great dignity and happiness of the soul; all other pretensions are low and poor, in respect of this. Here then is enlargement, to see the purity and beauty of His law, how just and reasonable, yea, how pleasant and amiable it is; that *His commandments are not grievous;* that they are beds of spices, the more we walk in them, still the more of their fragrant smell and sweetness we find.

And then, consequently, upon the larger and clearer knowledge of these things, the heart dilates itself in affection: the more it knows of God, still the more it loves Him, and the less it loves this present world. Love is the great *enlarger* of the heart to all obedience. Then nothing is hard, yea, the harder things become the more delightful.

All love of other things doth pinch and contract the heart, for they are all narrower than itself. It is framed to that wideness in its first creation, capable of enjoying God, though not of a full comprehending of Him. Therefore, all other things gather it in, and straighten it from its natural size;

only the love of God stretches and dilates it. He is large enough for it, yea it, in its fullest enlargement, is infinitely too narrow for Him. Do not all find it, if they will ask themselves, that in all other loves and pursuits in this world, there is still somewhat that pinches? The soul is not at its full size, but, as a foot in a strait shoe, is somewhere bound and pained, and cannot go freely, much less run: though another who looks on, cannot tell where, yet each one feels it. But when the soul is set free from these narrow things, and is raised to the love of God, then is it at ease and at large, and hath room enough; it is both *elevated* and *dilated*. And this word signifies a *high-raised* soul, and is sometimes taken for *proud* and *lofty;* but there is a *greatness* and *height* of spirit in the love of God and union with Him, that doth not vainly swell and lift it up, but, with the deepest humility, joins the highest and truest magnanimity. It sets the soul above the snares that lie here below, in which most men creep and are entangled, in that *way of life* which *is on high to the just*, as Solomon speaks.

Good reason hath David to join these together, and to desire the one as the spring and cause of the other; an *enlarged heart*, that he might *run the way of God's commandments*.

Sensible joys and consolations in God do encourage and enlarge the heart; but these are not so general to all, nor so constant to any. Love is the abounding, fixed spring of ready obedience, and will make the heart cheerful in serving God, even without those felt comforts, when He is pleased to deny or withdraw them.

In that course or race, are understood *constancy*, *activity*, and *alacrity;* and all these flow from the *enlargement of the heart*.

1. *Constancy*. A narrow, inthralled heart, fettered with the love of lower things, and cleaving to some particular sins, or but some one, and that in secret, may keep foot a while in the way of God's commandments, in some steps of them; but it must give up quickly, is not able to run on to the end of the goal. But a heart that hath laid aside every weight, and the

most close-cleaving and besetting sin, (as it is in that forecited place in the Epistle to the Hebrews,) hath stripped itself of all that may falter or entangle it, it runs, and runs on, without fainting or wearying; it is at large, hath nothing that pains it in the race.

2. *Activity.* Not only holding on, but running, which is a swift, nimble race. It stands not bargaining and disputing, but once knowing God's mind, there is no more question or demur. *I made haste and delayed not,* as in this Psalm the word is, did not stay upon why or wherefore: he stood not to reason the matter, but ran on. And this love, enlarging the heart, makes it abundant in the work of the Lord, quick and active, despatching much in a little time.

3. *Alacrity.* All is done with cheerfulness, so, no other constraint is needful, where this overpowering, sweet constraint of love is. *I will run,* not be hauled and drawn as by force, but *skip* and *leap;* as the evangelic promise is, that the *lame shall leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.* Isa. xxxv. 6. The Spouse desires her Beloved *to hasten as a roe and hind on the mountains of spices,* and she doth so, and each faithful soul runs toward him, to meet him in his way.

It is a sad heavy thing to do any thing as in obedience to God, while the heart is straitened, not enlarged towards Him by Divine love; but that once taking possession and enlarging the heart, that inward principle of obedience, makes the outward obedience sweet; it is then a natural motion. Indeed the soul runs in the ways of God, as the sun in his course, which finds no difficulty, being naturally fitted and carried to that motion; he *goes forth as a bridegroom, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.*

This is the great point which our souls should be studious of, to attain more *evenness,* and *nimbleness,* and *cheerfulness,* in the ways of God; and for this end we ought to seek above all things this *enlarged heart.* It is the want of this makes

us bog, and drive heavily, and run along upon little ground. Oh, my beloved, how shallow and narrow are our thoughts of God! Most even of those who are truly godly, yet are led on by a kind of instinct, and carried they scarcely know how, to give some attendance on God's worship, and to the avoidance of gross sin, and go on in a blameless course. It is better thus, than to run to *excess of riot* and open wickedness, with the ungodly world. But alas! this is but a dull, heavy, and languid motion, where the heart is not enlarged by the daily growing love of God. Few, few are acquainted with that delightful contemplation of God, which ventilates and raises this flame of love. Petty things bind and contract our spirits, so that they feel little joy in God, little ardent, active desire to do him service, to crucify sin, to break and undo self-love within us, to root up our own wills to make room for His, that His alone may be ours, that we may have no will of our own, that our daily work may be to grow more like Him in the beauty of holiness. You think it a hard saying, to part with your carnal lusts and delights, and the common ways of the world, and to be tied to a strict, exact conversation all your days. But Oh! the reason of this is, because the heart is yet straitened and enthralled by the base love of these mean things, and that arises from the ignorance of things higher and better. One glance of God, a touch of his love, will free and enlarge the heart, so that it can deny all, and part with all, and make an entire renouncing of all, to follow *Him*. It sees enough in Him, and in Him alone, and therefore, can neither quietly rest on, nor earnestly desire any thing beside Him.

Oh! that you would apply your hearts to consider the excellency of this way of God's commandments! Our wretched hearts are prejudiced; they think it melancholy and sad. Oh! there is no way truly joyous but this. *They shall sing in the ways of the Lord*, says the Psalmist. Psal. cxxxviii. 5. Do not men, when their eyes are opened, see a beauty in meekness, and temperance, and humility, a present delightfulness and quietness in them? Whereas in pride and passion, and

intemperance, there is nothing but vexation and disquiet. And then, consider the *end* of this way, and of this race in it, *rest and peace* for ever. It is the *way of peace*, both in its own nature, and in respect of its end. Did you believe that joy and glory which are set before you in this way, you would not any of you defer a day longer, but forthwith you would break from all that holds you back, and enter into this way, and run on cheerfully in it. The persuasion of those great things *above* would enlarge and greaten the heart, and make the greatest things *here* very little in your eyes.

But would you attain to this enlarged heart for this race, as you ought to apply your thoughts to these Divine things, and stretch them on the promises made in the world, so, above all, take David's course, seek this enlargement of heart from God's own hand. For it is here propounded and laid before God by way of request: See what is my desire; I would gladly serve Thee better, and advance more in *the way of Thy commandments;* now, this I cannot do till my heart be more enlarged, and that cannot be but by Thy hand. *When thou shalt enlarge my heart.* Present this suit often: it is in His power to do it for thee. He can stretch and expand thy straitened heart, can hoist and spread the sails within thee, and then carry thee on swiftly; filling them, not with the vain air of man's applause, which readily runs a soul upon rocks and splits it, but with the sweet breathings and soft gales of His own Spirit, which carry it straight to the desired haven.

Findest thou sin cleaving to thee and clogging thee? Cry to Him:—Help, Lord! set me free from my narrow heart.—I strive but in vain without Thee; still it continues so.—I know little of Thee; my affections are dead and cold towards Thee. —Lord, I desire to love Thee; here is my heart: and, lest it fly out, lay hold on it, and take thine own way with it: though it should be in a painful way, yet draw it forth, yea draw it that it may run after Thee. All is His own working, and all His motive is His own free grace. Let who will fancy themselves masters of their own hearts, and think to enlarge

them by the strength of their own stretches of speculation; they alone, they alone are in the sure and happy way of attaining it, who humbly sue and wait for this enlargement of heart from His hand who made it.

SERMON XVI.

ROMANS viii. 33, 34.

Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

OTHER men may fancy and boast as they please, but there are none in the world but the godly alone, that are furnished with sufficiently strong supports and comforts against all possible hazards. And of these doth the Apostle treat most freely, sweetly, and plentifully, in this chapter. He secures believers in their Christ, touching these two great evils, *after-condemnation*, and *present affliction*, that the one cannot befall them, and the other cannot hurt them.

For their immunity from the former, they have the clear word of the Gospel, and the seal of the Spirit; and that former privilege made sure, as the far greater, doth secure the other as the less.

They are freed from condemnation, and not only so, but entitled and ensured to a kingdom. And what hurt, then, can affliction do? Yea, it doth good; yea, not only it cannot rob them of their crown, but it carries them on towards it, is their highway to it: *If we suffer with Him, we shall also be glorified together.* Yea, all things to the children of God do

prove advantageous; severally taken in their present sense, they may seem evil, but taken jointly in their after issue, their working together is all for good. In their simple nature, possibly they are poison, yet contempered and prepared, they shall prove medicinal. *All these things are against me*, said old Jacob, and yet he lived to see even all these were *for* him. The children of God are, indeed, so happy, that the harshest things in their way change their nature, and become sweet and profitable. This much is effected by their prayers, which have a divine incantation in them. They breathe forth the expressions of their love to God, by which they are characterized, ver. 28, *them that love God;* and *that* is put on their hearts, the *impression of His love to them*, to which they are here led by the Apostle, as to the spring-head of all. All their comforts and privileges flow thence, yea all their love and their faith, appropriating those comforts and privileges. Yea, the very treasury of all together, Jesus Christ himself, is the free gift of this free love. He, as the greatest, ascertains all things besides as unspeakably less.

These two are such mighty arguments, that no difficulty nor grief can stand before them. The *love of God*, He is with us—who then can be against us? All the world it may be, but that all is nothing. Once it was nothing; it was that God who is our God, who loves us, and is for us, who made it something; and if He will, it may again be nothing. And as it is, at its best it is nothing, being compared with *another gift* which he hath bestowed on us; and having bestowed that, surely if there be any thing in this world can do us any good, we shall not want it. *He that spared not His own Son, but gave Him to the death for us, will he not with him give us all things.*

And to close all, He makes these two great immunities good to us in *Christ*. He fixes *there*. *There* we are freed from all fear of condemnation, or of being hurt by affliction. No accusation nor guiltiness can annul the righteousness of Christ, and that is made ours. No distress nor suffering can cut us

off from the love of God; and if it cannot do that, we need not fear it: all other hazards are no hazard, that being sure.

And in confidence of this, the Apostle gives the defiance, casts a challenge to angels, to men, to all the world, upon these two points, Who shall *accuse?*—Who shall *separate?*—Accuse to God, or separate from Him? Whatsoever times may come, the hardest that any can apprehend or foretell, if these two be not sufficient furniture against them, I know not what is.

Men are commonly busied about other events concerning them and theirs, what shall become of this or the other, and what if this or that fall out. But the conscience once raised to this inquiry, the soul being awake to discern the hazard of eternal death, all other fears and questions are drowned and lost in this great question, Am I condemned or not? Is my sin pardoned or not?

And then, a satisfying answer received concerning this, all is quiet; the soul reposes sweetly on God, and puts all its other concernments into His hands. Let Him make me poor and despised, let Him smite and chastise me, He hath forgiven my sin; all is well. That burden taken off, the soul can go light, yea, can leap and dance under all other burdens. Oh, how it feels itself nimble, as a man eased of a load that he was even fainting under! Oh! blessed the man whose sin is taken off, *lifted from his shoulders* (that is the word, Psal. xxxii. 1), laid over upon Christ, who could *bear* the whole load, and *take* it *away*, take it out of sight, which we could never have done; no, they would have sunk us for ever. That one word, αἴρει, John i. 29, signifies both, and answers to the two, Isa. liii. 4, *He hath borne our grief, and carried our sorrows;* lifted them away. Oh, how sweet a burden, instead of this, is that engagement of *obedience* and *love* to him as our Redeemer, and which is all he lays on us! If we follow him, and bear his cross, he is our strength, and bears both it and us. So then, this is the great point, the

heart's ease, to be delivered from the condemning weight of sin.

And certainly, while men do not think thus, their hearts have very slight impressions of the truth of these things. I fear, the most of us scarcely believe this condemnation to come, at least very shallowly, and so they cannot much consider the deliverance from it provided for us in Jesus Christ. I cannot see how it is possible for a heart persuaded of these things to be very careful about anything beside. You who eat and drink, and labour and trade, and bestow all your time either in the pains or the pleasures of this earth, what think you of eternity? Is it a light thing for you to perish for ever? After a few days vainly spent, to fall under the wrath of God for ever? Oh, that you would be persuaded to think on these things!

And you who have an interest in this free and blessed estate, why are your spirits so cold, so infrequent in the thoughts of it? Why are you not rejoicing in the Lord, gladdening yourselves in secret when you remember this?—Go the world as it will, my sin is forgiven me. Mistake me, accuse me whoso will, my God hath acquitted me in His Christ, and *he* loves me, and lives to intercede for me.

Methinks I hear some say, Ay, they who could say that, might be merry indeed; but, alas! I have no such assurance. *Who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect?* That is true; but here is the great point of so hard a resolution, Am I one of these?

That the Apostle doth thus specify the owners of this consolation, by this high and hidden character of their election, is not to render it doubtful and dark; for his main aim, on the contrary, is, both to extend it as far as it can go, and to make it as clear as may be to all that have interest in it: but he designates them by the primitive act of love fixing on them, so as it is now manifested to them in the subsequent effects which flow from their election: called, and sanctified, and conformed to Jesus Christ, both by the Spirit within them,

and by the sufferings that without arise against them in the world. They are such as, being *the sons of God*, are *led by the Spirit of God*, and *walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

And these things, indeed, considered as their characters, the stamp of God on them, the impressions of their election to life, do check the vain confidence of all carnal, ungodly professors of the name of Christ, and tell them that their pretended title to him is a mere delusion. Certainly, whosoever lives in the love of sin, and takes the flesh for his guide, that accursed, blind guide is leading him into the pit. What gross folly and impudence is it for any man, walking in the lusts of his own heart, to fancy and aver himself to be a partner of that redemption, whereof so great a part is, to deliver us from the power of our iniquities, to renew our hearts, and re-unite them to God, and possess them with His love!

The great evidence of thy election is, love. Thy love to Him gives certain testimony of His preceding, eternal love to thee: so are they here designated, *they that love God.* Thy choosing Him is the effect and evidence of His choosing thee. Now, this is not laborious, nor needs to be disputed. Amidst all thy frailties, feel the pulse of thine affection, which way it beats, and ask thy heart whether thou love Him or not; in this thou hast the character of thy election.

Know you not, that the redeemed of Christ and he are one? They live one life, Christ lives in them, and *if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*, as the Apostle declares in this chapter. So then, this we are plainly to tell you, and consider it, you that will not let go your sins and lay hold on Christ, have as yet no share in him.

But on the other side, the truth is, that when souls are once set upon this search, they commonly wind the notion too high, and subtilize too much in the dispute, and so entangle and perplex themselves, and drive themselves further off from that comfort that they are seeking after: such measures and

marks of grace they set to themselves for their rule and standard; and unless they find those without all controversy in themselves, they will not believe that they have an interest in Christ and this blessed and safe estate in him.

To such I would only say, Are you in a willing league with any known sin? Yea, would you willingly, if you might be saved in that way, give up yourself to voluptuousness and ungodliness, and not at all desire to follow Jesus Christ in the way of holiness? Then truly, I have not any thing as yet to say for your comfort: only, there is a salvation provided, and the door is yet open, and your heart may be changed. But, on the other side, are the desires of thy soul after Christ, a whole Christ, to be *righteousness*, and withal *sanctification* to thee? Wouldst thou willingly give up thyself to be ruled by him, and have him for thy king? Hadst thou rather choose to suffer the greatest affliction for his sake, to honour him, than to commit the least sin to displease him? Doth thy heart go out after him, when thou hearest him spoken of? Dost thou account him thy treasure, so that all the world sounds but as an empty shell to thee, when he is named? Says thy soul within thee? Oh, that he were mine! and, Oh, that I were his, that I could please him, and live to him! Then, do not toss thy spirit, and jangle and spin out thy thoughts in fruitless, endless doubtings, but close with this as thy portion, and be of good comfort; thy sins are, or will be, forgiven thee.

I add further: if thou sayest still, that thou findest none of all this, yet, I say, there is warrant for thee to believe and lay hold on this righteousness here held forth, to the end that thou mayest then find those things in thee, and find comfort in them. Thou art convinced of ungodliness; then believe on him who justifies the ungodly. Thou art condemned; yet Christ is dead and risen. Flee to him as such, as the *Lamb slain, he who was dead and is alive;* and then say, *Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, or rather, that is risen. Who shall accuse?* It is true, they make clamour

and make a noise, both Satan and thy conscience, but how can they fasten any accusation on thee? If they dare *accuse*, yet they cannot *condemn*, when the Judge hath acquitted thee, and declared thee free, who is greater than all, and hath the absolute power of the sentence. All charges and libels come too late, after He hath once pronounced a soul righteous. And who shall condemn? *It is Christ that died.* If the sentence of the law be brought forth, yet, here is the answer, it ought not to be *twice* satisfied; now, once it is satisfied in Christ, he hath died, and that stands for the believer. Whosoever flees to him, and lays hold on him for life, *He* cannot die again, nor canst thou die, for whom he died once. *Or rather is risen;* that raises the assurance higher, and sets it firmer, for this evidences that in his death all was paid. When he, being the surety, and seized on for the debt, and once death's prisoner, yet, was set free, this clears the matter that there is no more to be paid. And yet further, in sign that all is done, he is raised to the height of honour above all principalities and powers, is set at the right hand of the Father, and there he sits and lives *to make intercession,* to sue out the fulfilling of all for believers, the bringing of them home, lives to see all made good that he died and covenanted for. So, now that his righteousness is thine who believest, any challenge must meet with Christ first, and if it seize not on him, it cannot light on thee, for thou art in him, married to him. And the same triumph that he speaks, Isa. l. 8, whence these words are borrowed, is made thine, and thou mayest now speak it in him. I know not what can cast him down, who hath this word to rest upon, and to comfort himself in.

SERMON XVII.

ROMANS viii. 35, &c.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? &c.

Is this he who so lately cried out, *O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me?* who now triumphs, O happy man! *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?*

Yes, it is the same. Pained, then, with the thoughts of that miserable conjunction with a body of death, and so crying out, who will deliver, who will separate me from that? now, now, he hath found a Deliverer to do that for him, to whom he is for ever united, and he glories now in his inseparable union and unalterable love, which none can divide him from. Yea, it is through him, that presently after that word of complaint he praises God; and now, in him he triumphs. So vast a difference is there betwixt a Christian taken in himself, and in Christ! When he views himself in himself, then he is nothing but a poor, miserable, polluted, perishing wretch; but then he looks again, and sees himself in Christ, and there he is rich, and safe, and happy; he triumphs, and he glories in it, above all the painted prosperities, and against all the horrid adversities of the world; he lives in his Christ, content and happy, and laughs at all enemies.

And he extends his triumph; he makes a common good of it to all believers, speaks it in their name, *Who shall separate us?* and would have them partake of the same confidence, and speak in the same style with him. It is vain that men fancy these to be expressions of revelations, or some singularly-privileged assurances: then, they would not suit their end, which is clearly and undoubtedly the encourage-

ment of all the children of God, upon grounds that are peculiar to them from all the rest of the world, but common to them all, in all ages, and all varieties of condition.

It is true, all of them have not alike clear and firm apprehensions of their happy and sure estate, and scarcely any of them are alike at all times; yet, they have all and always the same right to this estate, and to the comfort of it, and when they stand in a right light to view it, they do see it so, and rejoice in it.

There be indeed some kinds of assurance that are more rare and extraordinary, some immediate glances or coruscations of the love of God upon the soul of a believer, a smile of His countenance; and this doth exceedingly refresh, yea, ravish the soul, and enables it mightily for duties and sufferings. These He dispenses arbitrarily and freely, where and when He will. Some weaker Christians sometimes have them, while stronger are strangers to them, the Lord training them to live more contentedly by faith till the day of vision come.

And that is the other, the less ecstatical, but the more constant and fixed kind of assurance, the proper assurance of faith: the soul, by believing, cleaves unto God in Christ as he offers himself in the gospel, and thence is possessed with a sweet and calm persuasion of his love; that being the proper work, to appropriate him, to make Christ, and in him, eternal life, ours. So that is the proper result and fruit of that its acting, especially when it acts any thing strongly, to quiet the soul in him. Then, *being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ*, and from that peace, joy, yea, even *glorying in tribulation*, as there follows. And these springing, not from an extraordinary sense or view, but from the very innate virtue of faith working kindly, and according to its own nature.

Therefore, many Christians do prejudice their own comfort and darken their spirits, by not giving freedom to faith to act according to its nature and proper principles. They will

not believe till they find some evidence, or assurance, which is quite to invert the order of the thing, and to look for fruit without settling a root for it to grow from.

Would you take Christ upon the absolute word of promise, tendering him to you, and rest on him so, this would ingraft you into life itself, for that he is, and so those fruits of the Holy Ghost would bud and flourish in your hearts. From that very believing on him would arise this persuasion, yea, even to a gloriation, and an humble boasting in his love. *Who shall accuse—Who shall condemn—Who shall separate?*

The undivided companion and undoubted helper and preserver of this confidence of faith, is an *active love* to Christ, leading to a constant study of holiness and strife against sin, which is the grand enemy of faith, which obstructs the very vital spirits of faith, which makes it sickly and heavy in its actings, and causes the palsy in the hand of faith, so that it cannot lay so fast hold. Therefore, this you should be careful of; yea, know that of necessity it attends faith, and as faith grows, holiness will grow, and holiness growing will mutually strengthen and establish faith. The comforts of the Holy Ghost are holy, purifying comforts, and the more the soul is purified and made holy, the more is it cleared and enlarged to receive much of these comforts. *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.* Unholiness is as damps and filthy mists in the soul; it darkens all.

Hence it is evident in what way Christians may and ought to aspire to this assurance. It is their portion, and in this way they are to aspire to it, and shall find it; if not immediately, yet, let them wait and go on in this way, they shall not miscarry.

Again, it appears that this assurance is no enemy to *holy* diligence, nor a friend of *carnal* security; on the contrary, it is the only thing that doth eminently ennoble and embolden the soul for all adventures and services. Base fears and doubtings, wherein some place much of religion, (and many weak Christians seem to be in that mistake, to think it a kind

of holy, spiritual temper to be questioning and doubting,) I say, these base fears can never produce anything truly generous, no height of obedience: they do nothing but entangle and disable the soul for every good work. *Perfect love casts out* this *fear*, and works a sweet, unperplexing fear, a holy wariness not to offend, which fears nothing else. And this confidence of love is the great secret of comfort, and of ability to do God service. Nothing makes so strong and healthful a constitution of soul as pure love: it dares submit to God, and resign itself to Him; it dares venture itself in His hand, and trust His word, and seeks no more than how to please Him. A heart thus composed, goes readily and cheerfully unto all services, to do, to suffer, to live, to die, at His pleasure; and firmly stands to this, that *nothing can separate* it from that which is sufficient for it, which is all its happiness, *the love of God in Christ Jesus.* Ver. 39. That is, indeed, His love to us, but it is so as it includes inseparably the inseparableness of our love to Him. For observe the things specified as most likely, if anything, to separate us: *Shall tribulation, or distress,* &c. Now these especially, being endured for His sake, cannot immediately have any likely visage of altering His love to us, but rather confirm us in it; but these shall not separate us, by altering our love to Him, by driving us from Him, and carrying us into any way of defection, or denial of His name, and so cut us off from our union with Him, and interest in His love; and that is the way wherein the weak Christian will most apprehend the hazard of separation. Now, the Apostle speaks his own sense, and would raise in his brethren the same confidence, as to that danger. There is no fear; not one of these things shall be able to carry us away. These mighty waves shall not unsettle our faith, nor quench the flame of our love. We shall be victors, and more than victors, in all. But how? Ver. 37. *Through Him that hath loved us.* Thus His love makes sure ours. He hath such hold of our hearts as He will not let go, nor suffer us to let go our hold: all is fast by His strength. He will

not lose us, nor shall any be able to pluck us out of His hand.

Jesus Christ is the *medium* of this love, the middle link that keeps all safe together betwixt God and man, being so closely united in his personal nature, and the persons of men in and by him, to the Father. So here, it is first called the *love of Christ*, ver. 35, and then, in the close, *the love of God in Christ;* the soul being first carried to him as nearest, but so carried by him into that primitive love of God that flows in Christ, and that gave even Christ to us as before. And this is the bottom-truth, the firm ground of the saints' perseverance, which men not taking aright, must needs question the matter. Yea, we may put it out of question upon their suppositions, for if our own purposes and strength were all we had to rely on, alas! how soon were we shaken!

So, *the love of God in Christ* is not only here mentioned as the point of happiness, from which we cannot be removed, but as the principle of firmness that makes itself sure of us, and us of it, and will not part with us.

Now, it is no pride in a Christian, but the truest humility, to triumph and glory in this. This is it that makes all sure; this is the great comfort and the victory of the saints. He that loved us, and bought us so dear, will not lightly slip from us; yea, upon no terms will he let us go, unless some stronger than he is, meet with him, and by force bereave him of us; which we know is impossible. He and his Father, who are one in themselves, and in their strength, and one in this love, are greater and stronger than all; and he that once overcame for us, always overcomes in us.

Thus he lets temptation and tribulations assault us, and thus neither disproves his love, nor endangers his right to us; yea, it doth but give proof and evidence of the invincible firmness of both. He suffers others to lie soft, and sit warm, and pamper their flesh at leisure; but he hath nobler business for his champions, his worthies, and most of all for the

stoutest of them: he calls them forth to honourable services, to the hardest encounters; he sets them on, one to fight with sickness, another with poverty, another with reproaches and persecutions, with prisons and irons, and with death itself. And all this while, loves he them less, or they him? Oh, no. He looks on and rejoices to see them do valiantly; it is the joy of his heart, no sight on earth so sweet to him; and it is all the while by his subduing, and in his strength, that they hold out in the conflict, and obtain the conquest.

And thus they are the more endeared to him by these services and these adventures of love for him, and he still likewise is the more endeared to them. Certainly, the more any one suffers for Christ, the more he loves Christ: as love doth grow and engage itself by all it does and suffers, and burns hotter by what it encounters and overcomes, as by fuel added to it. As to Jesus Christ, by what he suffered for us we are the dearer to him, so he is to us by all we suffer for his sake.

Love grows most by opposition from others whosoever, when it is sure of acceptance and the correspondence of mutual love in the party loved. Above all, this heavenly, Divine love is *strong as death*, a vehement flame, *a flame of God*, indeed, as the word is, Cant. viii. 6, and *many waters cannot quench it;* not all these that here follow one another, *tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword.* Yea, in the midst of these, I say, it grows: the soul cleaves closer to Christ, the more attempts are made to remove it from him, though *killed all the day long.* This passage from the Psalms is most fit, both to testify that persecution is not unusually the lot of the saints, and to give instance of their firm adherence to God in all troubles, as the Church there professeth. And if the saints in that dispensation could reckon in such a manner, much more ought Christians, upon a clearer discovery of the covenant of grace and their union with God in Christ. The saints are as in a common butchery in the world; yea, not only *as sheep for the slaughter*, but

sometimes as sheep for the altar, men thinking it a sacrifice. *They that kill you*, says our Saviour, *shall think they do God service.* Yet even this pulls not from him. They part with life; ay, why not? This life is but a death, and He is our life for whom we lose it.

All these things do but increase the victories and triumphs of love, and make it more glorious: as they tell of her multiplying labours to that champion, they are not only conquerors, but *more than conquerors*, by multiplied victories, and they gain in them all both more honour and more strength; they are the fitter for new adventures, and so more than simple conquerors. We overcome, and are sure not to lose former conquests, but to add more, and conquer on to the end; which other conquerors are not sure of. Oftentimes they outlive their own successes and renown, and lose on a sudden what they have been gaining a whole lifetime. Not so here: we are secured in the Author of our victories. It is *through Him that hath loved us;* and he cannot grow less, yea, he shall still grow greater, till all his enemies be made his footstool.

Having given the challenge, and finding none to answer, and that all, the most apparent, are in a most rhetorical accumulation silenced, *tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword,* &c., he goes on confidently in the triumph, and avers his assurance of full and final victory against all imaginable power of all the creatures: *Neither death nor life*, not the fear of the most terrible death, nor the hope or love of the most desirable life. And in the height of this courage and confidence, he supposes impossible enemies, *Nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers;*—unless you take it of the angels of darkness only; but if it could be possible that the others should offer at such a thing, they would be too weak for it. No sense of any *present things*, nor apprehensions of *things to come;* not anything which the vast circle of the world above or below; *nor any creature* can do it. Here sin is not specified, because

he is speaking of outward oppositions and difficulties expressly, and because that is removed by the former challenge, *Who shall accuse?* that asserting a free and final acquittance of all sin, a pardon of the curse, which yet will never encourage any of those to sin who live in the assurance of this love. Oh, no; and these general words do include it too, *Nothing present, nor to come,* &c. So it is carried clear, and is the satisfying comfort of all whom Jesus Christ hath drawn after him, and united in his love.

It is enough; whatsoever they may be separated from, the things or persons dearest in this world, it is no matter; the jewel is safe. None can take my Christ from me, and I am safe in him, as his purchase. None can take me from him, and being still in his love, and through him in the Father's love, that is sufficient. What can I fear? What can I want? All other hazards signify nothing. How little value are they of! And for how little a while am I in danger of them! Methinks, all should look on a believer with an emulous eye, and wish his estate more than a king's.

Alas, poor creatures! rich men, great men, princes and kings, what vain things are they that you embrace and cleave to! Whatsoever they be, soon must you part. Can you say of any of them, *Who shall separate us?* Storms may arise, and scatter ships that sail smoothly together in fair weather. Thou mayest be removed, by public commotions and calamities, from thy sweet dwellings, and societies, and estates. You may even live to see and seek your parting. At last you *must* part, for you must die. Then farewell parks and palaces, gardens and honours, and even crowns themselves. Then, dearest friends, children and wife must be parted with. *Linquenda tellus, et domus, et placens uxor.* And what hast thou left, poor soul, who hast not Christ, but that which thou wouldst gladly part with and canst not, the condemning guilt of all thy sins?

But the soul that is in Christ, when other things are pulled away, feels little or nothing: he cleaves to Christ, and these

separations pain him not. Yea, when that great separatist, death, comes, that breaks all other unions, even that of the soul and body, yet so far is it from separating the believer's soul from its beloved Lord Jesus, that, on the contrary, it carries it into the nearest union with him, and the fullest enjoyment of him for ever.

SERMON XVIII

Isaiah lix. 1, 2.

Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear.

But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear.

Our vain minds are naturally fruitful in nothing more than in mistakes of God. For the most part we think not on Him, and when we do it, we fancy Him according to our own affections, which are wholly perverse and crooked.

Men commonly judge it a vain thing to spend much pains and time in worshipping Him; and if they are convinced of this, and tied to it by the profession of His name, then they think all religion is a shell of external diligences and observances, and count it strange if this be not accepted. In the former chapter we find this, in the Prophet's contest with the people about their fasting, and their opinion of it; he cuts up their sacrifices, and lets them see what was within; the skin was sound and looked well, but being opened, the entrails were found rotten. And here he enters into another contest, against the latent atheism of their hearts, who after their manner of seeking God, not finding Him, and not being delivered, are ready to think that He either cannot, or will

not help, and rather rest on that gross mistake, than inquire into themselves for the true cause of their continuing calamities: they incline rather to think it is some indisposition in God to help, than what it truly is, a want of reformation in themselves that hinders it. It is not likely that they would say thus, or speak it out in plain terms; no, nor possibly speak it formally and distinctly within, not so much as in their thoughts; and yet, they might have a confused, dark conceit of this. And much of the atheism of man's heart is of this fashion: not formed into resolved propositions, but latent *, in confused notions of it, scarcely discernible by himself; at least not searched out and discerned in his own breast: there they are, and he sees them not, not written assertions, but flying fumes, filling the soul, and hindering it to read the characters of God that are writ upon the conscience.

The impenitency of men, in any condition, and particularly under distress, is from the want of clear apprehensions and deep persuasions of God, of His just anger provoked by their sin, and of His sweetness and readiness to forgive and embrace a returning sinner: of His sovereign power, able to rid them out of the greatest trouble, His ear quick enough to hear the cries, yea, the least whispering of a humbled heart in the lowest deep of his sorrow, and His arm long enough to reach them, and strong enough to draw them forth. *He that comes unto God, must believe that he is*, says the Apostle, Heb. xi. 6. So, certainly, he who *believes* that, must *come;* it will sweetly constrain him; he cannot but come who is so persuaded. Were men's hearts much impressed with that belief in all their troubles, they would eye men less, and God more, and without delay they would fasten upon the Church's resolution, Hos. vi. 1: *Come and let us return unto the Lord; for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up.* And this is the very thing that the Prophet would here persuade to by his present doctrine; and having

* Ezek. viii. 7. *Behind the wall.*

impleaded them guilty, he sets them a copy of humble confession, ver. 12, &c. Hence the frequent complaints in the Psalms, *Why hidest Thou Thyself?* So Psalm xxii. 2: *I cry, but Thou hearest not.*

In the words of these two verses, these two things appear; *a sad condition*, and *the true cause of it.*

The *condition*, I think, I have reason to call *sad:* it is God hiding His face that He will not hear. This may be either the *personal* estate of His *children*, or the *public* estate of His *Church.* From a soul He hides His face, not so much in the withdrawing of sensible comforts and sweet tastes of joy, which to many are scarcely known, and to such as do know them commonly do not continue very long, but it is a suspension of that lively influence of His Divine power, for raising the mind in the contemplation of Him and communion with Him in prayer and meditation, which yet may be, where those relishes and senses of joy are not. And the returns of it appear in beating down the power of sin, or abating and subduing it, making the heart more pure and heavenly, making it more to live by faith in Christ, to be often at the throne of grace, and to receive gracious answers, supplies of wants, and assistances against temptations. Now, when there is a cessation and obstruction of these and such-like workings, the face of God is *hid;* the soul is at a loss, seeks still and cannot find Him whom it loveth. And in this condition it cannot take comfort in other things; they are too low. It is a higher and nobler desire than to be satisfied, or diverted, with the childish things that even men delight in who know not God. It is a love-sickness, which nothing can cure but the presence and love of the party loved. Yea, nothing can so much as allay the pain, and give an interval of ease, or recover a fainting fit, but some good word or look, or at least some kind message, from Him. Set thee in a palace, and all delights about thee, and a crown on thy head, yet, if Hi love has ceased on thy heart, these are all nothing without Him. It was after David was advanced to his kingdom, and

is in the Psalm of the dedication of his royal house, that he said, *Thou didst hide Thy face, and I was troubled.* Psal. xxx. 7. *q. d.* All is dark; all the shining marble, and the gold, and the azure, lose their lustre, when Thou art not here dwelling with me.

And thus for the Church; God is the proper light, the beauty, the life of it. Deck it with all this world's splendour, with all the dresses of pompous worship, these are not its genuine beauty; and they provoke Him who is its *ornament* (as is Jer. ii. 32) to depart. But give it the native purity and beauty of holy ministers and ordinances well regulated, yet, even that is but a dead comeliness, proportion and feature without life, when God is absent.

And as for the matter of deliverances and working for her, which is here the thing in hand, none can do anything in that, not the wisest, nor the best of men, with all their combined wit and strength, when He retires and comes not forth, doth not shew Himself on the behalf of His people, and work their works for them. These have, it may be, some kind of prayer possibly; they offer at extraordinaries, and yet obtain nothing, are not heard. The saddest note in all the Song of Lamentations, is that at chapter iii. ver. 43, 44. *Thou hast covered with anger, and persecuted us; Thou hast slain, Thou hast not pitied. Thou hast covered Thyself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through.* Still, while that door stands open, there is hope and remedy for other evils; but that being shut, what can a people, or a soul expect, but growing troubles, one sorrow upon the back of another? Yea, that is the great trouble, the hiding of His face, and His refusing to hear. Observe Job xxxiv. 29. *When He giveth peace, who then can make trouble?* Now the other, in the same terms, would have been, *When He makes trouble, who can give peace?* But instead of this, it is, *When He hides His face, who then can behold Him?* No peace but in beholding Him, and nothing but trouble, *that* is the grand trouble, when He *hides His face.* And it is expressed in both cases, whether it

be personal or national, *whether against a nation or a man only.*

This is the thing wherein the strength of other troubles lies, that which gives them weight, when they impart and signify thus much, that the face of God is hid from a soul or a people.

We ought to inquire if this be not our condition at this time. Hath He not hid His face from us? Are we not left in the dark, that we know not which way to turn us? Either we must still and do nothing, or, if we stir, we do but rush one upon another, as in darkness, contesting each to have the way, and yet, when we have it given us, we know not well which way to go. And we think to be cleared, but it fails us: as in this chapter, ver. 9. *We wait for light, but behold obscurity, for brightness, but we walk in darkness: we grope for the wall like the blind, and stumble at noon-day as in the night.* Our counsels are strangely darkened, and there is no right understanding one of another. By all our debates, little or no clearing of things is attained, but our passions are more inflamed, and parties are further off; the light of sound judgment gone, and with it the heat of love, instead of which, that miserable, infernal heat, heat without light, mutual hatreds and revilings; both sides (verbally at least) agreeing in the general terms both of their desires and designs, and yet, falling out about modes and fashions of them. And to say no more of parties, the enemies of religion on both hands, right and left, are in action and in power, and only those who love that which we conceive is the way of truth, standing as a naked prey to whether of the two shall prevail. Desires and prayers we have presented, and see as yet no appearance of an issue, but further confusions, even fasting to strife and debate. And where are there any that look like persons to stand in the gap, lifting up *holy hands, without wrath or doubting?* Hearts are still as unhumbled, and live as unreformed as ever! New intestine troubles are most likely to arise, few or none laying it to heart, and with calm, lowly spirits mourning before God

for it. *Ephraim against Manasseh, and Manasseh against Ephraim, and they both against Judah; and for all this, His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still.* Isa. ix. 21.

But generally, men ought to be less in descanting one on another, and more in searching and inquiring each into himself. Even where it may seem zeal, yet, nature and passion may more easily let in the other; but this self-search and self-censure is an uneasy task, the most unpleasant of all things to our carnal self-loving hearts. But the heavy hand of God shall never turn from us, nor His gracious face turn towards us, till there is more of this amongst us. Most say their prayers, and as they are little worth, they look little after them, inquire not what becomes of them. But, my brethren, would we continue to call, and find favourable answers, we must be more within. The heart must be made a temple to God, wherein sacrifices do ascend; but that they may be accepted, it must be purged of idols, nothing left in any corner, though never so secret, to stir the jealousy of our God, who sees through all. Oh, happy that heart that is, as Jacob's house, purged, in which no more idols are to be found, but the Holy God dwelling there alone as in His holy temple!

Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened.] Much of all knowledge lies in the knowledge of causes; and in practical things, much of the right ordering of them depends on it. The true cause of a disease found out is half the cure. Here we have the miseries of an afflicted people reduced to their real cause: that which is not the cause, is first removed. *Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; but your iniquities have separated between you and your God.*

We are not only to be untaught this error, that we think not so, but are to be taught to believe and think on that truth, that God is still the same in power and goodness, to keep up the notion of it in our hearts. So we may call in past experiences and relations of God's former workings for His people, and that with much use and comfort. He who brought forth

His people out of Egypt with an outstretched arm, (as still they are reminded of that deliverance by the prophets, and called to look on it as the great instance and pledge of their restoration by the same Hand,) can again deliver His people when at the lowest. Isa. l. 2.

And with this belief, we shall not faint in the time of deep distress, whether our own, or the Church's, knowing the unalterable, invincible, infinite power of our God; that all the strength of all enemies is nothing, and less than nothing, to His; their devices, knots of straw. What is it that is to be done for His Church, if her and His glory be interested in it? There remains no question in point of difficulty; that hath no place with Him. The more difficult, yea, if impossible for us or any human strength, the more fit work for Him. *Because it is hard for you, shall it also be hard for Me?* saith the Lord in the prophet. And where Jeremy uses that argument in prayer, he hath his answer returned in the same words, as the echo to the prayer, resounding from Heaven, (ch. xxxii. ver. 17, compared with ver. 27,) and that in relation to the great restoration of the Jews from Babylon, as is expressly promised, ver. 36, &c. And there the Prophet gives that first great example of Divine power, the forming of the world, ver. 17. *Behold, Thou hast made the heaven and the earth by Thy great power.*

Men think it is an easy, common belief, and that none doubt of the omnipotency of God. But Oh, the undaunted confidence it would give to the heart, being indeed firmly believed, and wisely used and applied to particular exigencies! Men either doubt, or (which, upon the matter, for the use of it is all one) they forget, who the Lord is, when their hearts misgive them because of the Church's weakness, and the enemy's power. What is that upon the matter? Remember whose is the Church, God's, and what His power is, and then see if thou canst find any cause of fear. See Isa. xli. 14. *Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men—few* or *weak men*— (so the word is) *of Israel: I will help thee, saith the Lord,*

and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. So, Isa. li. 12, 13. *I, even I, am he that comforteth you.* There is the strength of it. *Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man, which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth?* Do but think aright on Him, and then see if it be *possible* for thee to fear. All thy little doubts and despondencies of mind will fly and vanish away before one clear thought of thy God. Though the world were turning upside down, it shall go well with them who fear Him.

And as this apprehension of God strengthens faith, so it quickens prayer. It stirs thee up to seek to Him for help, when thou knowest and rememberest that there it is. There is help in Him, power enough, and no want of readiness and good will neither. If we apply ourselves to seek Him aright, His hand is as strong to save, and His ear as quick to hear, as ever. And in this, that *His ear is not heavy*, is signified both His speedy and certain knowledge of all requests sent up to Him, and His gracious inclination to receive them. Now, these persuasions do undoubtedly draw up the heart towards Him.

Again, as they strengthen faith, and quicken prayer, so, they teach us repentance, direct us inward to self-examination, to the searching, and finding out, and purging out of sin, when deliverance is delayed; for we are sure it stops not upon either of these on God's part, either the shortness of His hand, or the dulness of His ear. Whence is it then? Certainly, it must be somewhat on our side, that works against us, and prejudices our desires. So here, thus you see the clear aim of it: *Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear.* What is it then that hinders? Oh! it is this, out of all doubt, *Your iniquities separate*, old sins unrepented of, and new sins still added, as all impenitent sinners do. Now this separates *between you and God*, for He is a holy God, a just God: who

hates iniquity. And between you and *your* God: that pleads no connivance at your sins, but rather calls for nearer inspection and sharper punishment. *He will be sanctified in those that are near Him,* in *them* especially. Their sin is aggravated much by that relation, *your God.* To sin against Him so grossly, so continuedly, with so high a hand, and so impenitent hearts; not reclaimed by all His mercies, by the remembrance of His covenant made with you, and mercies bestowed on you, nor by the fear of His judgments threatened, nor by the feeling of them inflicted; no returning or relenting, not of His own people to their God—surely, you must be yet more punished. Amos iii. 2. *You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities. q. d.* I let others escape with many things that I cannot pass over in you. You fast and pray, it may be, you howl and keep a noise, but you amend nothing, forsake not one sin for all your sufferings, and for all your moanings and cries. You would be delivered, but do not part with one of your lusts or wicked customs, even for a deliverance; and so the quarrel remains still. It is that which separates, is as a huge wall betwixt us, betwixt Me and your prayers, and betwixt you and My helping hand; and though I do hear, and could help, yet, I will not: till this wall be down, you shall not see Me, nor find by any gracious sign that I hear you.—This hides His face, *that He will not hear.*

This way God hath established in His ordinary methods with His people: though sometimes He uses his own privilege, yet, usually He links *sin* and *calamity* together, and *repentance* and *deliverance* together.

Sin separates and hides His face, not only from a people that professes His name, but even from a soul that really bears His name stamped upon it. Though it cannot fully, and for ever, cut off such a soul, yet, in part, and for a time, it may, yea, to be sure, it will separate, and hide the face of God from them. Their daily inevitable frailties do not this; but

either a course of careless walking, and many little unlawful liberties taken to themselves, that will rise and gather as a cloud, and hide the face of God; or some one gross sin, especially if often reiterated, will prove as a firm stone-wall, or rather as a brazen-wall, built up by their own hands betwixt them and Heaven, and will not be so easily dissolved or broken down; and yet, till that be, the light of His countenance, who is the life of the soul, will be eclipsed and withheld from it.

And this considered, besides that law of love that will forbid so foul ingratitude, yet, I say, this considered, even our own interest will make us wary of sinning. Though we were sure not to be yet altogether separated from the love of God by it, yet, thou who hast any persuasion of that love, darest thou venture upon any known sin? Thou art not hazardless and free from all damage by it, if thou hast need of that argument to restrain thee. Then, before thou run upon it, sit down and reckon the expense; see what it will cost thee if thou do commit it. Thou knowest that once it cost the heart-blood of thy Redeemer to expiate it, and is that a light matter to thee? And though that paid all that score, nothing thou canst suffer being able to do any thing that way, yet, as an unavoidable present fruit of it, it will draw on this damage; thou shalt be sure for a time, it may be for a long time, possibly most of thy time, nearly all thy days, it may darken much that love of God to thee, which if thou dost but esteem, think on it. It changes not in Him, but a sad change will sin bring on thee, as to thy sight and apprehension of it. Many a sweet hour of blessed communion with thy God shalt thou miss, and either be dead and stupid in that want, or mourn after Him, and yet find, though sighs and tears continue, the door shut, yea, a dead wall raised betwixt thee and Him, and at best much straitening and pains to take it down again; contrary to other walls and buildings, which are far more easily pulled down than built up, but this is a great deal easier built up than pulled down. True, thy God could cast it down with a word,

and it is His free grace that must do it, otherwise thou couldest never remove it: yet will He have thee feel thy own handy-work, and know thy folly. Thou must be at pains to dig at it, and may be it will cost thee broken bones in taking it down, pieces of it falling heavy and sad upon thy conscience, and crushing thee; as David cried out at that work, for a healing word from God, *Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice.* Psal. li. 8. It will force thee to say, O fool that I was, what meant I! Oh! it is good, keeping near God, and raising no divisions. What are sins? False delights, by which a man but provides his own vexation. Now, this distance from God, and all this turmoiling, and breaking, and crying before He appears again, consider if any pleasure of sin can countervail this damage. Surely, when thou art not out of thy wits, thou wilt never make such a bargain for all the pleasure thou canst make out of any sin, to breed thyself all this pains, and all this grief, at once to displease thy God, and displease thyself, and make a partition between Him and thee. Oh, sweet and safe ways of holiness, walking with God in His company and favour! He *that orders his conversation aright,* he *sees the loving-kindness of the Lord:* it is shewn to him; he lives in the sight of it. Psal. l. 23.

But if any such separation is made, yet, is it thy great desire to have it removed? Why then there is hope. See to it, labour to break it down, and pray to Him to help thee, and He will put forth His hand, and then it must fall. And in all thy sense of separation, look to him who *brake down the middle wall of partition.* Eph. ii. 14. There it is spoken of as betwixt men, Jews and Gentiles, but so as it was also between the Gentiles and God, who were separated from His people, and from Himself. See ver. 16. *That he might reconcile both to God in one body;* and ver. 18. *Through him we have access by one Spirit to the Father.* And then he adds, that they were *no more strangers and foreigners,* dwelling on the other side of the wall, παροίκοι, as the word is, *but*

fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.

Oh, that we knew more what it were to live in this sweet society, in undivided fellowship with God! Alas! how little is understood this living in Him, separated from sin and this world, which otherwise do separate from Him; solacing our hearts in His love, and despising the base muddy delights that the world admires; hoping for that *New Jerusalem*, where none of these walls of sin are, nor any one stone of them, and for that bright day wherein there is no cloud nor mist to hide our Sun from us.

Now, for the condition of the Church, know sin to be the great obstructor of its peace, making Him to withdraw his hand, and hide His face, and to turn away His ear from our prayers, and loath our fasts: as Isa. i. 15, and Jer. xiv. 12. The quarrel stands—sin not repented of and removed. The wall is still standing—oaths, and sabbath-breaking, and pride and oppression, and heart-burning still remaining. Oh, what a noise of religion and reformation! All sides are for the name of it, and how little of the thing! The Gospel itself is despised, grown stale, as trivial doctrine. Oh, my beloved, if I could speak many hours without intermission, all my cry would be, *Repent and pray. Let us search and try our ways, and turn unto the Lord our God.* Oh, what walls of every one's sin are set to it! Dig diligently to bring down thine own; and for those huge walls of public national guiltinesses, if thou canst do nothing to them more, compass them about as Jericho, and look up to Heaven for their downfall. Cry, Lord, these we ourselves have reared, but without Thee who can bring them down? Lord, throw them down for us. A touch of Thy hand, a word of Thy mouth, will make them fall. Were we less busied in impertinencies, and more in this most needful work, it might do some good. Who knows but the Lord might make His own way clear, and return and visit us, and make His face to shine, that we might be saved.

SERMON XIX.

Romans xiii. 11, 12, 13, 14.

And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.

The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

Let us walk honestly as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.

But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

The highest beauty of the soul, the very image of God upon it, is holiness. He that is aspiring to it himself, is upon a most excellent design; and if he can do any thing to excite and call up others to it, he performs a work of the greatest charity.

This, St. Paul doth frequently and pressingly in his writings. This epistle, as it doth admirably clear the doctrine of *justification*, it doth not less earnestly urge the doctrine of *sanctification*. That one sentence about the middle thereof, does excellently unite them, and so is the summary of all that goes before, and all that follows: Ch. viii. ver. 1. *There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

The present words are as an alarm, or morning watch-bell, of singular use, not only awaking a Christian to his day's work, but withal reminding him what it is. And these two shall be all our division of them. 1. Our *awaking* sounded. 2. Our *walking* directed. The former, ver. 11, 12, tells us, it is time to rise, and calls us up to put on our clothes, and being soldiers, our arms. The latter, ver. 13, directeth our behaviour and employment throughout the day. The last

verse doth shortly, and that fully and clearly, fold up both together. We shall take the words just as they lie.

And that knowing the time.] This imports much in all actions, and here it is the Apostle's great argument. Now it is unfit to sleep, *knowing the time:* however it might have been before, now it is very unseasonable and unsuitable, that you lie snoring as at midnight. Do you know what o'clock it is? (ἤ ὥρα.) It is time to rise; it is morning, the day begins to appear.

[*Observation.*] All the days of sinful nature are dark night, in which there is no right discerning of spiritual things. Some light there is of reason, to direct natural and civil actions, but no day-light. Till the sun arise, it is night still, for all the stars, and the moon to help them. Notwithstanding natural speculations, that are more remote, and all prudence and policy for affairs, that come somewhat nearer to action, yet, we are still in the night. And you do think that a sad life; but the truth is, we sleep on in it, and our heads are still full of new dreams which keep us sleeping. We are constantly drunk with cares or desires of sense, and so our sleep continues. Sometimes it is called *death—dead in sins*, &c. Now, sleep is brother to death; and so, by it not unfitly is the same state resembled. No spiritual life we have at all, and therefore in that sense are truly dead. But because there is in us a natural life, and in that a capacity of spiritual life, therefore we are said to be asleep. As in a deep sleep, our soul is bound up and drowned in flesh, through a surcharge of the vapours of gross, sensible things that we glut ourselves withal; and the condition of our wisest thoughts, in relation to our highest good, are nothing but dreams and reveries. Your projectings, and bargainings, and buildings, these be a better sort of dreams; but your envyings, and mutual despisings and discontents, your detracting and evil-speaking, these are more impertinent, and to yourselves more perplexing. And your sweetest enjoyments in this life, which you think most real, are but shadows of delight, a more pleasant sort of dreams. All

pomps and royal solemnities, the Scripture calls φαντασίας, *phantasies*, Acts xxv. 23. A man will not readily think so while he is in them. *Somnium narrare vigilantis est.* We do not perceive the vanity of our dreams, and know that they are so, till we be awaked. Sometimes in a dream a man will have such a thought that it is but a dream, yet doth he not thoroughly see the folly thereof, but goes on in it. The natural man may have sometimes a glance of such thoughts, that all these things he is either turmoiling or delighting in are vanity, and nothing to the purpose; yet he awakes not, but raves on still in them; he shifts a little, turns on his bed as a door on its hinges, but turns not off, does not rise.

But the spiritual-minded Christian, who is indeed awake, and looks back on his former thoughts and ways, Oh how does he disdain himself, and all his former high fancies that he was most pleased with, finding them dreams! Oh what a fool, what a wretch was I, while my head was full of such stuff, building castles in the air, imagining and catching at such gains, and such preferments and pleasures, and either they still running before me, and I could not overtake them, or, if I thought I did, what have I now, when I see what it is, and find that I have embraced a shadow, false hopes, and fears, and joys! *He thinks he hath eaten, and his soul is empty.* Isaiah xxix. 8. And you that will sleep on may; but sure I am, when you come to your death-bed, if possibly you awake then, then shall you look back with sad regret upon whatsoever you most esteemed and gloried in under the sun. While they are coming towards you, they have some shew; but, as a dream that is past, when these gay things are flown by, then we see how vain they are. As that luxurious king who caused to be painted on his tomb two fingers, as sounding one upon another, with that word, *All is not worth so much, Non tanti est.* I know not how men make a shift to satisfy themselves, but take a sober and awakened Christian, and set him in the midst of the best of all things that are here, his heart would burst with despair of satisfaction, were it not for a hope that

he hath, beyond all that this poor world either attains or is seeking after, and that hope is, indeed, the dawning of the day that is here spoken of.

It is time to awake, says he; *your salvation is nearer than when ye believed.* That bright day you look for is hastening forward; it is nearer than when you began to believe. The night is far spent, the gross darkness is already past, some day-light there is, and it is every moment growing, and the perfect, full morning-light of it is very near.

[*Observation.*] Grace, and the Gospel that works it, compared with the dark night of nature, is the day, and it is often so called: the Apostle here calls it so, *Let us walk honestly as in the day.* But yet, that same light of the Gospel shining to us in the word, and within us by the Spirit, is but the appearance or approaching of the day, a certain pledge of it, yea, a kind of beginning of it, telling us that it is near. It is one and the same light, and where it enters into any soul, it makes sure that eternal full day to it, that it shall not be disappointed of, more than the day can go back, and the sun fail to rise when the dawn is begun. And this begun light is still growing clearer, and tending to the perfect day. Prov. iv. 18. And at the first peep or appearance of it, so much it is, that the soul is called to awake and arise, and put on day-clothes, and apply itself to the actions of the day; and that is the thing the Apostle here presses by it.

Oh, the blessed Gospel, revealing God in Christ, and calling up sinners to communion with Him, dispelling that black night of ignorance and accursed darkness that otherwise had never ended, but passed on to an endless night of eternal misery! Says not Zacharias with good reason in his song, that it was *through the tender mercy of God that this day-spring from on high did visit us?*

Now, says the Apostle, *this day appearing, it is time to awake.* And the longer it is since it began to appear, and the clearer the light grows, the more high time is it to awake

and rise, and cast off night clothes and night-works, *works of darkness*, and to put on garments, yea, *armour of light*. He that is a soldier, his garments are not on till his arms be on and his sword about him; then he is ready: especially in a time and posture of war, and the enemy lying nigh, even round about him; and this is every Christian's state while he is here. An *armour of light*, not only strong and useful, but comely and graceful, fit to walk abroad in, bright shining armour; as your old poets describe their champions, dazzling their enemies' eyes.

And thus apparelled, we are to behave ourselves suitably, to *walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness*. That is a night-work, as the Apostle hath it, 1 Thess. v. 7. To stagger and reel in the streets in day-light, to be drunk in the morning, is most shameful: so is that spirit of drunkenness as unbeseeming a Christian to see them hurrying and justling one another, as drunk with love of earthly things, and their spirits by that besotted and unfitted for spiritual things, that they find no pleasure in them.

Chambering and wantonness.] All impure, lascivious conversation, how vile are these, and unfit for the light! Even Nature is ashamed to be seen in these things, in the natural light of the day; much more will Grace in the spiritual light of the Gospel.

Strife and envy.] As shuffles and hot quarrels are most of all unseemly in the streets in day-light, so, the quarrels and jarrings of Christians are very shameful before the light wherein they walk. The Gospel of Christ, the grand doctrine thereof, is meekness and love. But Oh, where are they, those graces that so abound in the doctrine of Christianity, and yet are so scarce in the lives of Christians? Where are they who look gladly on the good of others, and bear evils and injuries from their neighbours patiently, and repay evil with good? Thus it ought to be; but, on the contrary, how ready are the most to part on the least occasions, to bite and snarl at each other! There is more still of the spirit of the dragon, than

of the dove. My brethren, remember and consider, that the Gospel-light shines amongst us, and that more clearly than in former times, and more clearly than to most people in the world in these times; and do not outface and affront the blessed light with the accursed works of darkness. You might have been profane in former times, or in some other place, at a cheaper rate.

Know, that if this glorious light do not break off your course of sin, it will increase your load of judgment. The heaviest of all condemnations, is to live in darkness, and to live and die in it, in the midst of light. Amongst all your desperate, accursed wishes, this shall be one, and a chief one, that either the Son of God had never come into the world, or that you had never heard of him.

Much of what we aim at were gained, if Christians could be brought to consider who they are, and to walk like themselves: it would raise them above the base pleasures of sin, and the snares of the world. *The way of life is on high to the just:* there is a holy loftiness, a disdain of all impure, sordid ways. It is said of Jehoshaphat, that *his heart was lift up in the ways of the Lord.* 2 Chron. xvii. 6. As a vain, self-conceited lifting up of the heart is the great enemy of our welfare (as it is written of another, even of a good king, Hezekiah, that *his heart was lift up, therefore was wrath upon him*); so, there is a happy exaltation of the heart, when it is raised in God, to despise all communion with the unholy, and the unholy ways of the world. This, my brethren, is that which I would were wrought in you by the consideration of our holy calling. We are *called to holiness, and not to uncleanness.—Ye are the children of the light and of the day.* 1 Thess. iv. 7; v. 5. Base night-ways, such as cannot endure the light, do not become you. O that comeliness which the saints should study, that *decorum* which they should keep in all their ways, ἐυσχημονως, one action like another, and all like Christ, living as in the light. They that converse with the best company, such persons are

obliged to more decency in apparel. We live in the light, in the company of angels, of God, and Jesus Christ; and therefore should not act anything that is low or mean, unbeseeming the rank we keep, and the presence of those with whom we associate. When the king passes through the country in progress, they who see him seldom, being either to attend him in his way, or to receive him into their houses, will labour to have all things in the best order they can for the time; but they that live at court, and are daily in the king's presence, are constantly court-like in their habit and carriage, and all about them. *O followers of the Lamb*, let your *garments* be always *white;* yea, let Him be your garment; clothe yourselves with Himself; have your robes made of his spotless fleece.

Put on the Lord Jesus.] No resemblance is more usual than that of people's customs to their clothes, their habitudes to their habits. This the Apostle used in the foregoing words, *Put on the* [furniture or] *armour of light*, having *cast off the works of darkness*, as clothes of darkness, night-clothes. And the word, *walking decently*, has something of the same resemblance contained in it. And here we have the proper beauty and ornament of Christians, even the Lord Jesus, recommended to them under the same notion, *Put on the Lord Jesus Christ.* Him we put on by faith, and are clothed with him as our righteousness. We come unto our Father in our Elder Brother's perfumed garments, and so obtain the blessing which he, in a manner, was stripped of for our sakes. He did undergo the curse, and *was made a curse* for our sakes: so the Apostle speaks of him, Gal. iii. 13. We *put him on*, as *the Lord our righteousness*, and are made *the righteousness of God in him.* This investiture is first, when our persons are made acceptable, and we come into court. But there is another putting of him on, in the conformity of holiness, which always accompanies the former; and that is it which is here meant. And this I declare unto you, that whosoever does not *thus* put him on, shall find

themselves deceived in the other, if they imagine it belongs to them.

They who are the sons of God, and have the hope of inheriting with Christ, do really become like Him, are even heirs in some degree now; and that blessed expectation they have, is to be fully like him. 1 John iii. 3. *When He appears, we shall be like Him,* saith the Apostle. And in the meanwhile they are endeavouring to be so, and somewhat attaining it; as he adds, *Every one that hath this hope, purifieth himself, as He is pure.* He is the only begotten Son, and we are so restored in him to the dignity of sons, that withal we are really changed into his likeness. He is the *Image of the Father* that is renewed upon us.

It is the substance of religion, to be like him whom we worship*. Man's end and perfection is, *likeness to God.* But Oh, the distance, the unlikeness, yea, the contrariety, that is fallen upon our nature! *The carnal mind is enmity to God:* the soul is, as it were, become flesh, and so most unsuitable to the Father of Spirits; it is become like the beast that perishes. Now, to repair and raise us, this was the course taken: we could not rise up to God; He came down to us, yea, into us, to raise and draw us up again to Him. He became like us, that we might become like Him. God first put on man, that man might put on God. Putting on the Lord Jesus, we put on man; but that man is God, and so, in putting on man, we put on God. Thus, putting on Christ, we put on all grace: we do this, not only by studying him as our copy and example, but by real participation of his Spirit; and that, so as that daily the likeness is growing, while we are carried by that Spirit to study his example, and enabled in some measure to conform to it; so that these two grow together, *growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* He is the *armour of light* before spoken of: all our ornament and

* *Summa religionis imitari quem colis.*

safety is in him. Some pictures of great persons you have seen, with arms and robes on at once: thus we, when clothed with Christ, have our arms and robes both on at once, yea, both in one, for He is both. So, this is the great study of a Christian, to eye and read Christ much, and, by looking on him, to become more and more like him, making the impression deeper by each day's meditation and beholding of him. His Spirit in us, and that love his Spirit works, make the work easy, as sympathies do. And still the more the change is wrought, it becomes still the more easy to work it. This is excellently described by this Apostle, 2 Cor. iii. 18.

Now we see our business: Oh that we had hearts to it! It is high, it is sweet, to be growing more and more Christ-like every day. What is the purchase or conquest of kingdoms to this? Oh, what are we doing, who mind not this more? Even they whose proper work it is, how remiss are they in it, and what small progress do they make! Are we less for the world and ourselves, and more for God, this year than the former?—more meek and gentle, abler to bear wrongs, and to do good for them, more holy and spiritual in our thoughts and ways, more abundant and fervent in prayer? I know there will be times of deadness, and winter seasons, even in the souls of living Christians; but it is not always so, it will come about yet; so that take the whole course of a Christian together, he is advancing, putting on still more of Christ, and living more in Him. There is a closer union betwixt the soul and this its spiritual clothing, than betwixt the body and its garments: that doth import a transformation into Christ, put on as a new life, or a new self. The Christian by faith doth this: he puts off himself, old carnal self, and instead thereof, puts on Jesus Christ, and thenceforward hath no more regard of that old self, than of old cast clothes, but is all for Christ, joys in nothing else. This is a mystery which cannot be understood but by partaking of it.

My brethren, learn to have these thoughts frequent and occurrent with you on all occasions. Think, when about any

thing, How would Christ behave himself in this? Even so let me endeavour.

You will possibly say, They that speak thus, and advise thus, do not do thus. Oh, that that were not too true! Yet there be some that be sincere in it, and although it be but little that is attained, yet, the very aim is excellent, and somewhat there is that is done by it. It is better to have such thoughts and desires, than altogether to give it up; and the very desire, being serious and sincere, does so much change the habitude and usage of the soul and life, that it is not to be despised.

Now follows, *And make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.* And it will follow necessarily. We hear much to little purpose. Oh, to have the heart touched by the Spirit with such a word as is here! It would untie it from all these things. These are the words, the very reading of which wrought so with Augustine, that, of a licentious young man, he turned a holy, faithful servant of Jesus Christ. While you were without Christ, you had no higher nor other business to do, than to attend and serve the flesh; but once having put Him on, you are other men, and other manners do become you. *Alia ætas alios mores postulat.*

This forbids not eating, and drinking, and clothing, and providing for these, nor decency and comeliness in them. The *putting on of Christ* does not bar the sober use of them: yea, the moderate providing for the necessities of the flesh, while thou art tied to dwell in it, that may be done in such a way as shall be a part of thy obedience and service to God. But to *lay in provisions for the lusts of it,* is to victual and furnish His enemy and thine own; for the *lusts of the flesh* do strive against God's Spirit, and war against thy soul. Gal. v. 17. 1 Pet. ii. 11.

This was the quarrel betwixt God and His own people in the wilderness. Bread for their *necessities,* He gave them, but they required meat for their *lusts,* (which should rather have been starved to death than fed,) and many of them fell in

the quarrel. He gave them their desire, but gave them a plague with it, and they died with the meat between their teeth. Many who seem to follow God, and to have put on Christ, yet, continuing in league with their lusts, and providing for them, they are permitted a while so to do, and are not withheld from their desire, and seem to prosper in the business; but, though not so sudden and sensible as that of the Israelites, there is no less certain a curse joined with all they purchase and provide for that unhallowed use. It is certainly the posture and employment of most of us, even who are called *Christians*, to be purveyors for the flesh, even for *the lusts of it; (ad supervacuum sudare;)* these lusts comprehending all sensual, and all worldly, fleshly, self-pleasing projects. Even some things that seem a little more decent and refined, come under this account. What are men commonly doing, but projecting and labouring, beyond necessity, for fuller and finer provision for *back and belly*, and to feed their pride, and raise themselves and theirs somewhat above the condition of others about them? And where men's interests meet in the teeth, and cross each other, there arise heart-burnings and debates, and an evil eye, one against another, even on a fancied prejudice, where there is nothing but crossing a humour. So, the grand idol is their own will, that must be provided for and served in all things, that takes them up early and late, how they may be at ease, and pleased, and esteemed and honoured. This is the *making provision for the flesh and its lusts*, and from this are all they called who have *put on Christ;* not to a hard, mean, unpleasant life, instead of that other, but to a far more high and more truly pleasant life, that disgraces all those their former pursuits, which they thought so gay while they knew no better. There is a transcendant sweetness in Christ, that puts the flesh out of credit. *Put on Christ,* thy robe royal, and *make no provision for the flesh;* surely thou wilt not then go and turmoil in the kitchen. A soul clothed with Christ, stooping to any sinful delight, or an ardent pursuit of any thing earthly, though

lawful, doth wonderfully degrade itself. Methinks it is as a king's son in his princely apparel, playing the scullion, sitting down to turn the spits. A soul living in Christ indeed, hath no vacancy for the superfluous, luxurious demands of flesh, yea, supplies the very necessities of it with a kind of regret. *A necessitatibus meis libera me, Domine,* said one; *Deliver me, Lord, from my necessities.*

Oh, raise up your spirits, you that pretend to any thing in Christ; delight in him, and let his love satisfy you at all times! What need you go a begging elsewhere? All you would add makes you the poorer, abates so much of your enjoyment of him; and what can compensate that? *Put on the Lord Jesus,* and then view yourselves, and see if you be fit to be slaves to flesh and earth.

These two, *Put on the Lord Jesus,* and *Make no provision,* are directly the representation of the Church, Apoc. xii. A woman clothed with the sun, and having the moon under her feet, needed borrow no beauty from it, or any thing under it. She left the scarlet, and the purple, and the gold, to the harlot after spoken of, for her dressing.

The service of the flesh is a work the Christian cannot fold to, till he forgets what clothes he has on. This is all, my brethren. Oh that we could be once persuaded to *put on Christ,* and then resolve and remember to do nothing unbeseeming that attire!

SERMON XX.

PSALM cvii. 43.

Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the LORD.

MOST men live a brutal sensitive life, live not so much as the life of reason; but far fewer the Divine life of faith, which is

further above common human reason than that is above sense. The spiritual light of Grace is that which makes day in the soul: all other wisdom is but night-light. *Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness.* Eccl. ii. 13. This higher sort of knowledge is that the Prophet speaks of.

Having discoursed excellently through the Psalm, of the wisdom, power, and goodness of God, so legible in His providence towards men, and often called up the dull minds of men to consider these His works, and bless Him for them, he closes with this applaudment of their happiness that truly do so, *Whoso is wise,* &c.

They that spake it, knew not how true their speech is, who have called the world *a nest of fools.* It is true, there is very little even of natural clearness of judgment amongst men, but surely far less of this true spiritual wisdom. So that if we read this as a question, *Whoso is wise?*—Oh, how few are there! And yet, most imagine they are; few are convinced they are fools, and that is the height of their folly. That word is most true, Job xi. 12; *Vain man would be wise, though he be born as the wild ass's colt.* In youth, he runs wild, unbroken, and unuseful; and in fuller age, hath but a brutish, slavish life, yokes in with beasts in the same kind of labour, or in little better; turmoiling and drudging to serve his base lusts, his gain, his pleasure, and forgets quite what high condition the soul that sparkles within him is born to, and made capable of. In a word, he knows not God. That is both his folly and his misery. How much of life passes ere we consider what we live for! And though all applied, how incapable are a great many to know any thing! *Inter homines quid homine rarius?* Among men what more rare than *man,* a truly rational being? To this purpose there is a notable word, Job xi. 8, 9.

Now, to stir up your desires and endeavours after this wisdom, consider, that it is the proper excellency of the rational nature, the true elevation of human nature, to be wise. And

they that are not such, and know somewhat of their own defect, yet, would willingly pass for such, and had rather be accounted uncomely, yea, even dishonest, than unwise; (call a man any thing rather than a fool;) but yet, if they could, would rather have the thing than the reputation of it, and desire really to be wise, if it were in their power.

Now, it were good to work on this design within us, and to have it drawn into the right channel. Would you be wise? Then, seek true wisdom. What most men seek and admire in themselves and others, are but false shadows and appearances of wisdom; the knowledge either of base, low things, as to scrape and gather together, or else of vain, unprofitable things, and such knowledge as is for the most part but imaginary. For most things in state-affairs take another bias and course, are not so much modelled by wit, as most men imagine. And for the secrets of nature, we have little certain knowledge of them. How short is our life to attain any knowledge! That is an excellent word, Job viii. 9. But the knowledge here set before us, is the best kind of knowledge, that of the highest things, Divine things. I say, the best kind of knowledge of them, for there are notions even of these things, that have little in them; either curious, fruitless disputations of such points as are most removed both from our notice and our use, or a useless knowledge of useful things. But this is a well-regulated and sure-footed knowledge of Divine things, as God himself hath revealed them.

This wisdom descends from above; therefore, for the attainment of it, these two things are necessary: 1st, To know that we want it, sensibly and feelingly to know this, that we know nothing of the things of God. *Multi ad sapientiam pervenirent, nisi se jamjam pervenisse arbitrarentur: Many men would have attained to wisdom, if they had not fancied or imagined that they had already attained it.* I speak not now of the lowest sort, the grossly, the brutishly ignorant even of the letter of Divine truths, but such as can give themselves or others, if put to it, a good account of the principles of

faith and holiness, have read and heard much, and possibly learned and retained not a little that way, yet still are but ignorants, strangers to this heavenly wisdom. Therefore men must first know this, that they must go anew to school again, and become as little children. Wisdom invites no other. *Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither.* Prov. ix. 4. The *strange woman*, and so, all the enticements to sin, they invite the same persons, (ver. 16,) but to a directly opposite end: she calls the fools to befool them, to drown them in folly and wretchedness; but Wisdom calls them, to unbefool them, to recover them and teach them the way of life.

2dly. Being convinced and sensible of the want of it, to use the right way to attain it, to give all diligent attendance on the word and ordinances of God, to desire it of Him. Desire is all: if you desire much, you shall have much. Vent thy desire this way Heavenwards, whence this wisdom descends. This light springs from on high. Man cannot raise himself to it without Another. James i. 5. *If any man lack wisdom,*—if he is but once sensible of that, why then the sweetest, easiest way to attain it that can be desired, is pointed out,—*let him ask it of God, who giveth liberally, and upbraideth not:* does neither harshly refuse, nor upbraidingly give it, but delights to give it to them that ask it, even His own Holy Spirit, the spring of this wisdom, as He hath promised.

We are all too little in this humble seeking and begging of this Divine knowledge, and that is the cause we are so shallow and small proficients. *If thou cry, and lift up thy voice for understanding, if thou search for it as for hid treasures.* Prov. ii. 3. Sit down upon thy knees and dig for it; that is the best posture to fall right upon the golden vein, and go deepest to know the mind of God, in searching the Scriptures, to be directed and regulated in His ways, to be made skilful in ways of honouring Him and doing Him service. This, neither men nor angels can teach him, but God alone. *For the Lord giveth wisdom.* Ver. 6.

Of this wisdom, we have here the *character* and the *privilege.*

I. The *character: Whoso will observe these things.* That looks back to the doctrine of the Psalmist, which is very divinely sweet. He had been extolling the goodness of God in general, in His dealings with men, and instancing, in divers occurrent and remarkable particulars, the fitness and mildness of His chastisements, the seasonableness and sweetness of His deliverances, as correcting us for our greater good, and relieving us in our greatest need, when we are nearest despairing of relief. This is exemplified in travellers and prisoners, in sick men and seamen, and in the various disposal of the state of all sorts of persons, the highest and the meanest; and the repeated sweet burden of the song is, *O that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!* And in the end, he declares the result of all, verse 42, the joy of the godly, the shame and silencing of the wicked, who usually either mistake, or slight, or despise the providence of God in the rule of human affairs, who readily speak big their own thoughts, which are vain, promising themselves continual success. In the end He shall clear Himself, and gladden the souls of His people, and clothe His enemies with shame. Wait awhile, and thus it shall be; they shall change places. *He pours contempt upon princes,* and *sets the poor on high from affliction,* and so rights Himself and them that wait on Him. Then *the righteous shall see it and rejoice, and all iniquity shall stop her mouth.* And it is a great point of true wisdom, rightly to observe these things.

This observing hath in it, first, a believing notice of these things, to take such instances aright, when they meet our eye, to know these things to be indeed the Lord's doings; and so, when we are in any present strait, to believe accordingly, the same inspection of His eye, and secret conduct of His hand, to be in all. Now, it is a great point to have the heart established in these persuasions. We are generally much defective in this, and they most who least suspect themselves of it. But withal, the observing or *keeping* of these things, (so the

word is,) this firm believing hath in it these two following on it, and flowing from it, *serious contemplation*, and *suitable action*.

1. To observe these things is, often to turn our eye to the view of these things, and to keep it on them, so as to have our hearts warmed with them, to be deeply taken with wonder and love. But alas! our souls are drowned in flesh, dragged down from things that become them and are worthy of them, to drudge and weary themselves in the mire and clay. How few are they who make it a great part of their daily business, to behold God in His works and ways with themselves and others! Some, in respect of others, are called *great spirits;* but Oh, what are they? What a poor greatness is it, to project for a great estate, or great places and titles, or to conceive great revenges of little wrongs! There is something even in nature, of greatness of spirit very far beyond the bastard, false character that most take of it, and that is above most things others imagine great, and despises them. But true greatness is this, to have a mind much taken up with the greatness of God, admiring and adoring Him, and exciting others to do so; grieved, and holily angry, that men regard Him so little, breathing forth such wishes as these of the Psalmist, both to express their own thoughts, and to awake sleeping, besotted men about them, *O that men would praise the Lord for His goodness*, &c. They could wish a voice that could reach many thousands; and if they had one audible to all the world, would use it no otherwise than to be precentors of the praises of God, to call up and begin the song, *O that men would praise*, &c.

Consider yourselves, my brethren, and trace yourselves into your own hearts, whether often in the day your thoughts run this way, finding the meditation of God sweet to you, or whether they do not run out much more to vain things, and are seldom here; either hurried and busied in a surcharge of affairs, or, if vacant, yet spinning themselves out in frothy,

foolish fancies, that you would be ashamed to look back upon. You might entertain Divine and heavenly thoughts, even while about your earthly employments and refreshments; but this is little known, and little sought after. Make it your business to learn more of this wisdom. Call in your hearts, commune often with yourselves and with God; be less abroad, and more within, and more above. It is by far the sweetest life. Beg of God to wind up your hearts, when you find them heavy and dull, that they follow you slowly in this, and need much pulling and hauling from your hand: a touch from His hand will make them mount up easily and nimbly. Oh! seek His drawing; *Draw me, I will run after Thee.* And when you meet together, let this be your business, to speak of Him who alone is to be exalted, who doth and disposeth all as He pleases. Say to friends, and kindred, and neighbours, Oh, how great and how gracious a God have we! Oh, that we could bless Him!

2. To keep these things, is to walk according to the firm belief and frequent thoughts of them; to fear Him, and to walk humbly and warily, because our follies draw on His rods, and to study to please Him, and no matter who be displeased; and when He corrects, to fall down humbly under His hand, who hath our sickness and health, our life and death, and all that concerns us, in His absolute power. If any thing advance or advantage us before others, endeavour to be the more lowly and serviceable to Him. If in a low condition, still bless and reverence Him, for His presence will turn the meanest cottage, yea, the darkest dungeon, into a palace.

The chief delight of the saints is, to offer praises to God, to gather them in from all His works, to send up to Him. And His chief delight in all His works is, to receive these praises of them from their hands; they articulate them, make a reasonable sacrifice of them. Psal. cxlv. 10. *All Thy works shall praise Thee, and Thy saints shall bless Thee.* We are called to this high work, yet lie behind, and most unworthily and foolishly debase ourselves in other things. But they that

are wise, if there be any, will mind this, will not let the Lord's marvellous and gracious doings pass without notice.

II. The *privilege* of this wisdom. It is a high proof of His love to us, that He loves to be seen work by us, and stoops to take our acclamations and approbation, hath such regard to them, and rewards them so richly, even thus: *Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.* Observe, *They that are wise, and observe, shall understand* further. *To him that hath shall be given;* to him that *usefully hath.* That is, *to have,* and so it is there meant;—to him that improves it to His advantage who gave it. The greatest difficulty is to begin, as one said of his growing rich, "That he came hardly by a little riches, and easily by great riches." Having once got a stock, he grew rich apace. So, once taking, be it but the first lessons of this wisdom, learning these well shall facilitate thy knowledge exceedingly. *The wise increaseth learning.* Prov. i. 5. Wouldst thou but receive and hearken to the easiest things represented by God, these would enlighten and enlarge thy soul to receive more; especially walking by the light thou hast, be it ever so little, that invites and draws in more. Be diligent in the practice of what you know, if you would know more. Believe it, that is the way to grow. *Whoso observes,* keeps these things, acts according to the knowledge of them, (as John vii. 17) *he shall understand,* shall understand it by finding it. *They shall understand it in themselves;* (the word is in the reciprocal mood, *Hithpahel;*) it shall be particularly and effectually shewn unto them; they shall experience it, and so understand it, and that is the only lively understanding of it. Men may hear, yea, deliver large discourses of it, and yet not understand the thing. Happy are they to whom this is given! *Solus docet qui dat, et discit qui recipit:* He alone teaches, who gives; and he learns, who receives.

Loving kindness. Heb. *graciousness.* All sorts of kindnesses, even outward and common mercies, in those shall he

understand His goodness: in recoveries and deliverances from dangers and temporal blessings, be their portion in them less or more, though the things be common, yet they come to be his own by a particular stamp of love, which to others they have not. And the children of God know it, they can find it out and can read it, though the world that looks on it cannot. And indeed, to them, the lowest things are disposed of, in order to the highest: their daily bread is given them by that same love that gives them Christ: all is given in Him. So the curse is taken away, and all is sweetened with a blessing. *A little that a righteous man hath, is better than the abundance of the wicked.*

But the things they chiefly prize and desire, as indeed they deserve so to be, are of another sort; in their very being and nature, are love-tokens, effects of that peculiar free-grace that chose them to life. And this is called the *light of God's countenance. His everlasting love.* Now *they that are wise, and observe these things, they shall understand* this *loving-kindness.* Not that they first are thus *wise,* before they partake of this loving-kindness; no; by it this *wisdom* was given them; but this promise is made to their improvement of that gift, and walking in those ways of *wisdom.* Not only are they loved of God, but they shall *understand* it. He will manifest Himself to them, and tell them He loves them. And the more they walk in these ways, the more clearly shall they perceive, and powerfully find His love manifested to them.

This is the highest inducement that can be to such as have any interest in it. When this love hath but once touched them, though as yet they know it not certainly, yet it works that esteem and affection, that nothing can be admitted into comparison with it. While carnal men wallow in the puddle, these are the crystal streams a renewed soul desires to bathe in, even the love of God. O! let me find that; no matter what I have or what I want. In poverty, or any distressed, forsaken condition, one good word or good look from Him, makes

me up. I can sit down content and cheerful, and rejoice in that, though all the world frown on me, and all things look dark and comfortless about me, that is a piece of Heaven within the soul. Now, of this experimental, understanding knowledge of this love, there are different degrees; there is a great latitude in this. To some are afforded, at some times, little glimpses and inlets of it in a more immediate way; but these stay not: *suavis hora, sed brevis mora.* Others are upheld in the belief of it, and live on it by faith: though it shine not so clear, yet a light they have to walk by. Though the sun shines not bright out to them all their life, yet they are led home, and understand so much love in their way, as shall bring them to the fulness of it in the end. Others, having passed most of the day, have a fair glimpse in the very evening or close of it. But, howsoever, they that walk in this way by this light, whatsoever measure they have of it, are led by it to the land of light. The connexion here made, you see, *They that wisely observe these things, shall understand this loving-kindness.* A wise observing of God's ways, and ordering our own to His mind, is the certain way to obtain much experienced knowledge of his love.

This love is most free, and, from the beginning to the end, works of itself; but, in the method of it, God hath thus linked things together, made one portion of grace, in the use of it, draw on another. And this His children should prudently consider. There is such a like speech, Psal. l. 23. *Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth Me; and to him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I shew the salvation of God.*

The *contemplation* of God in His works, sets the soul open to receive the influences of this love: by looking towards Him, it draws His eye towards it, as one look of love draws on another. Certainly, many that have some desire of the light of God's countenance, and evidences of His love, yet, in not applying their souls to consider Him, do much injure themselves.

Heavenly thoughts do refine the soul, as fire works itself

higher and to a purer flame by stirring. To be blessing God for His goodness, giving Him praise in the view of His works in the world, and for His church, and particularly for ourselves, this both disposes the heart to a more suitable temper for receiving divine comforts, and invites Him to let them flow into it. For if He have such acknowledgments for general goodness and common mercies, how much larger returns shall He have upon the discoveries of special love! Is it a sight of God as reconciled, thou wouldst have? Now, praise sets a man amongst the angels, and they behold His face.

Again, *action*, walking in His ways humbly and carefully, and so waiting, never wants a successful return of much love. How can He who is goodness itself, hide and reserve Himself from a soul that yields up itself to Him, hath no delight but to please Him, hates and avoids what may offend Him? This, surely, is the way, if there is any under Heaven, to enjoy communion with Him.

They that forget Him, and disregard their ways, and are no way careful to order them to His liking, do but delude themselves with mistaken fancies of mercy. I beseech you, be warned. There cannot be solid peace in the ways of sin: *no peace to the wicked, saith my God.* Outward common favours you may share for a time; but these have a curse with them to you, and you shall quickly be at an end of these receipts; and then you would look towards Him for some persuasions of His loving-kindness, but are likely to find nothing but frowns and displeasure. *O! consider this, ye that forget God, lest He tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you.*

Even they who have some title to this love of God, and are desiring further evidence of it, yet, do often sit exceedingly in their own light, and work against their end, still bent on that assurance they would have, and yet neglecting the way to it, which certainly is in a manner to neglect itself. Were they more busied in honouring God, doing Him what service they can in their station, striving against sin, acknowledging His

goodness to the world, and even to themselves, that they are yet in the region of hope, not cut off in their iniquities, thus *offering praise*, and *ordering their conversation aright*, submitting unto Him, and giving Him glory; their assurances and comforts, in the measure He thinks fit, would come in due time, and sooner in this way than in any other they could take.

Observe these things, beware of sin, and *ye shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.* It is true, this love of God changes not, nor hangs on thy carriage, nor on anything without itself; yea, all our good hangs on it; but know, as to the knowledge and apprehension of it, it depends much on the holy frame of thy heart, and the exact regulation of thy ways. Sin obstructs and darkens all; those are the clouds and mists; and where any believer is adventurous on the ways of sin, he shall smart for it. Where sin is there will be a storm, as Chrysostom's word is of Joshua *. The experience of all witnesseth this. No strength of faith will keep out floods of doubting and troublous thoughts, where any novel sin hath opened a gap for them to rush in by. See David, Psal. li., expressing himself as if all were to begin again, his joy taken away, and his bones broken, and to sense all undone: nothing will serve but a *new creature. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.*

There is a congruity in the thing itself, and God hath so ordered it, that vexation and anguish should still attend sin, and the ways of holiness be ways of peace. Say men what they will, great falls leave wounds and smart behind them, and they must be washed with sharper liquor before balm and oil be poured into them. And not only will more notorious breaches disturb thy peace, but a tract of careless and fruitless walking. If thou abate of thy attendance on God, and thy fear cool towards Him, lagging and falling downwards to something you are caring for and taken with, you shall find an

* Ὅπου ἁμαρτία ἐκεῖ χειμών.

estrangement, it may be insensible at first and for a while because of thy sloth, that thou dost not observe diligently how it is with thee; but, after a time, it shall be more easily known, but more hardly mended. And there are none of us but might find much more of God in this our way homewards, if the foolishness and wanderings of our hearts did not prevent us.

Be persuaded, then, you whose hearts He hath wrought for Himself, to attend better on him, and the advantage shall be yours, doubt it not. And though for a time you find it not, yet wait on, and go on in that way; it shall not disappoint you. The more you let go of the false, vain comforts of the world for His sake, the more richly you shall be furnished with His. Oh! we make not room for them; that is the great hinderance. Consider Him, behold His works, bless Him, confess Him always worthy of *praise for His goodness, and His wonderful works to the children of men*, however He deal with thee in particular; and assuredly, He shall deal graciously with thee, and ere long thou shalt find it, and be forced to acknowledge it. Though it may be thou want these bright shinings of comforts thou wouldst have, yet, looking to Him, and walking before Him, *observing these things*, thou shalt have of His light to lead thee on, and a calm within; sweet peace, not that height of joy thou desirest.

There are often calm, fair days without storm, though it be not so clear sun-shine; and in such days a man may travel comfortably. I would have Christians called off from a perplexed over-pressing of this point of their particular assurance. If we were more studious to please Him, forgetting ourselves, we should find Him remember us the more; yet, we should not do so for this neither, but simply for Himself. In a word, this is thy wisdom; mind thy duty, and refer to Him thy comfort.

SERMON XXI.

PSAL. cxix. 96.

I have seen an end of all perfection; but Thy commandment is exceeding broad.

GRACE is a Divine light in the soul, and shews the true colours of things. The Apostle overshoots not when he says, *The spiritual man judgeth all things.* He hath undeniably the advantage: he may judge of natural things, but the natural man cannot judge of spiritual things. Yea, the truest judgment of natural things, in respect to our chiefest end, springs particularly from spiritual wisdom: that makes the true parallel of things, and gives a just account of their differences, as here.

I have seen an end, &c.] All that have any measure of spiritual light, are of this mind; but certainly, they that are more eminently blessed with it, have a more high and clearer view of both parts. David, who is generally, and with greatest likelihood, supposed to be the author of this Psalm, was singularly advantaged to make this judgment of things. He had, no doubt, a large measure of the knowledge of God and of His law, which here he declares to be so large; and being both a wise and a great man, might know more than most others, even of all other perfections, might trace them to their utmost, and see their *end,* as he expresses it. This same verdict we have from his son Solomon, after much experience in all things; who having the advantage of peace and riches, did particularly set himself to this work, to a most exact inquiry after all things of this earth. He set nature on the rack, to confess its utmost strength for the delighting and satisfying of man; with much pains and art he extracted the very spirit of all, and after all, he gives the same judgment we have here; his book writ on that subject being a paraphrase on this sen-

tence, dilating the sense, and confirming the truth of it. It carries its own sum in those two words which begin and end it; the one, *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity*, and the other, *Fear God, and keep His commandments, for that is the whole duty of man.* And these here are just the equivalent of those two; the former of that beginning word, *I have seen an end of all perfection;* and the latter of that concluding one, *But Thy commandment is exceeding broad.*

When mean men speak of this world's greatness, and poor men cry down riches, it passes but for a querulous, peevish humour, to discredit things they cannot reach, or else an ignorant contempt of things they do not understand; or, taking it a little further, but a self-pleasing shift, a willingly undervaluing of those things, of purpose to allay the displeasure of the want of them; or at the best, if something of truth and goodness be in the opinion, yet, that the assent of such persons is (like the temperance of sickly bodies) rather a virtue made of necessity, than embraced of free choice. But to hear a wise man, in the height of these advantages, proclaim their vanity, yea, kings from the very thrones whereon they sit in their royal robes, give forth this sentence upon all the glories and delights about them, is certainly above all exception. Here are two, the father and the son; the one raised from a mean condition to the crown, instead of a shepherd's staff, to wield a sceptre, and that, after many afflictions and dangers in the way to it; which, to some palates, gives a higher relish and sweetness to honour, than if it had slid on them before they could feel it, in the cheap, easy way of an undoubted succession. Or, if any think David's best days a little cloudy, by the remains of insurrections and oppositions, in that case usual; as the jumbling of the water is not fully quieted for a while after the same is over; then, take the son, succeeding to as fair a day as heart can wish, both a complete calm of peace, and a bright sunshine of riches and regal pomp, and he able to improve these to the highest. And yet, both these are perfectly of the same mind in this great point. The son having

peace and time for it, though a king, would make his throne a pulpit, and be a preacher of this one doctrine, to which the father's sentence is the fittest text I have seen.

The words give an account of a double prospect; the latter, being as it were, the discovery of a new world after the travelling over the old, expressed in the former clause: *I have seen an end of all perfection*, i. e., taken an exact view of all other things, and seen their end; *but Thy commandment* is of exceeding extent and perfection, and I see but a part, and there is no end of it.

I have seen an end.] I have tried and made experiment of much of what this world affords, and the rest I see to the uttermost of it, how far it reaches. The Psalmist, as standing on a vantage ground, sees clearly round about him the furthest horizon of earthly excellencies and advantages, and finds them not to be infinite or unmeasurable; sees that they are bounded, yea, what their bounds are, how far they go at their very furthest, *an end of all*, even of perfection. And this is in effect what I find, that their end stops short of satisfaction. A man may think and desire beyond them, yea, not only *may*, but *must:* he cannot be terminated by their bounds, will still have a stretch further, and feels them leave him, and then finds a void. All which he says most ponderously in these short words, giving the world the slight thus: It is not so great a matter as men imagine it; the best of it I have examined, and considered it to the full, taken the whole dimension: all the profits and pleasures under the sun, their utmost goes but a short way; the soul is vaster than all, can look and go much further.

I will not attempt the particulars, to reckon all, or be large in any: the Preacher, Solomon, hath done this matchlessly, and *who is he that can come after the king?* If any be sick of that poor disease, esteem of riches, he can tell you the utmost of these, that *when they increase, they are increased that eat them, and what good is to the owners thereof, save the beholding of them with their eyes?* Eccl. v. 11. Yea, locking

them up, and not using them, and still gathering, and all to no use, this is a madness: it is all one as if they were still in the mines under the ground, and the difference none, but in turmoiling pains in gathering, and tormenting care in keeping. But take the best view of them, supposing that they be used, that is, spent on family and retinue, why then, what hath the owner but the sight of them for himself? Out of all his dishes, he fills but one belly. Of all his fair houses and richly-furnished rooms, he lodges but in one at once. And if his great rent be needful for his great train or any other ways of expense, is it an advantage to need much? Or is he not rather poorer who needs five or six thousand pounds by year, than he that needs but one hundred?

Of all the festivities of the world and delights of sense, the result is, *laughter is mad;* and mirth, and orchards, and music, these things pass away as a dream, and are still to begin again. And so gross and earthly are they, that for the beasts they may be a fit good, but for the divine, immortal soul, they cannot. A horse lying at ease in a fat pasture, may be compared with those that take delight in them.

Honour and esteem are yet vainer than those pleasures and riches that furnish them. Though they be nothing but wind, compared to solid soul delights, yet, as to nature, there is in them somewhat more real than in the fame of honour; which is no more, indeed, than an airy, imaginary thing, and hangs more on others than any thing else, and not only on persons above them, but even those below; especially that kind which the vanity of man is much taken with, all popular opinion, than which there is nothing more light and poor, and that is more despised by the elevated sort of natural spirits, a thing as unworthy as it is inconstant. No slavery like the affecting of vulgar esteem; it enthrals the mind to all sorts. Often the worthiest share least in it. See Eccl. ix. 11—15. True worth is but sometimes honoured, but always envied. Eccl. iv. 4, *Again, I considered all travail, and every right work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbour.* And with

whomsoever it is thou seekest to be esteemed, be it with the multitude, or more chiefly with the wiser and better sort, what a narrow thing is it at largest! How many nations know neither thee nor those who know thee!

Beyond all these things is inward worth, and even that natural wisdom, such as some minds have to a far more refined height than others. A man by it sees round about him, yea, and within himself. That Solomon grants to be an excellent thing, Eccl. iv., yet, presently finds the end of that perfection, ver. 16. That guards not from disasters and vexations; yea, there is in it an innate grief, amidst so many follies. Eccl. i. 18. *In much wisdom is much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow.* Yea, give a man the confluence of all these, which is so rare, make him at once rich, and honourable, and healthful, and encompassed with all the delights of nature and art, and wise to make the best improvement of all they can well afford, (and there is much in that,) yet, there *is an end of all these perfections.* For there is quickly an end of himself who hath them: he dies, and that spoils all. Death breaks the strings, and that ends the music. And the highest of natural wisdom, which is the soul of all nature's advantages, that ends then, whether practical or political. In that day are all state projects and high thoughts laid low, if speculative. For, in spite of all sciences and knowledge of nature, a man goes out in the dark; and if thou art learned in many languages, one death silences all thy tongues at once. So says Solomon, Eccl. ii. 16, *And how dieth the wise man? as the fool.* Yea, suppose a man were not broken off, but continued still in the top of all these perfections; yea, imagine much more, the chiefest delights of sense that have ever been found out, more solid and certain knowledge of nature's secrets, all moral composure of spirit, the highest dominion, not only over men, but a deputed command over nature's frame, the course of all the heavens, and the affairs of all the earth, and that he was to abide in this estate; yet would he see *an end of this perfection,* that is, it would come short of

making him happy. It is an union with a Higher Good by that love that subjects all things to Him, that alone is the endless perfection: *Thy commandment is exceeding broad.*

You may think this a beaten subject, and possibly, that some other cases or questions were fitter for Christians. I wish it were more needless. But Oh, the deceitfulness of our hearts! Even such as have shut out the vanities of this world at the fore-gate, let them in again, or some part of them at least, at the postern. Few hearts clearly come off untied from all, but are still lagging after somewhat; and thence so little delight in God, in prayer and holy things. And though there be no fixed esteem of other things, yet, that indisposition to holy ways argues some sickly humour latent in the soul; and therefore this is almost generally needful, that men be called to consider what they seek after. Amidst all thy pursuits, stop and ask thy soul, For what end is all this? At what do I aim? For surely, by men's heat in these lower things, and their cold indifference for Heaven, it would seem we take our portion to be here. But, Oh, miserable portion at the best! Oh, short-lived happiness! Look on them, and learn to see this, the *end of all perfections*, and to have an eye beyond them, till your hearts be well weaned from all things under the sun. Oh! there is little acquaintance with the things that are above it, little love of them, still some pretensions, some hopes that flatter us,—"I will attain this or that; and then"—Then what? What if *this night, thou fool, thy soul shall be required of thee?*

But Thy commandment.] The former part of this sentence hath within every man's breast somewhat to suit with it and own it. Readily, each man, according to his experience and the capacity of his soul, hath his sense, if awake, of the unsatisfactoriness of all this world. Give him what thou wilt, yet, still there is empty room within, and a pain in that emptiness, and so, vexation, a tormenting windiness in all. And men of more contemplative minds have higher and clearer thoughts

of this argument and matter, and may rise to a very high moral contempt of the world; and some of them have done so. But this other part is more sublime, and peculiar to a Divine illumination. That which we find not *without*, we would have *within*, and would work out of ourselves what cannot be extracted from things about us. Philosophy is much set on this, but it is upon a false scent, and so still deluded. No, it *is* without us; not within us, but above us. That fulness is in God, and there is no communion with Him, or enjoyment of Him, but in the way of His commandment. Therefore, this is the discovery that answers and satisfies, *Thy commandment is exceeding broad.*

Commandment.] He speaks of all as one, I conceive, for that tie and connexion of them all, on account of which he that breaks one, is guilty of all. A rule they are, and are so one, as a rule must be. One authority runs through all: that is the golden thread they are strung on. Break that any where, and all the pearls drop off. Psal. cxix. 6. *Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect to all Thy commandments.* Otherwise, one piece shames another, like uneven and incongruous ways. The legs of the lame not being even, make an unseemly going. And as it here, so, a plural word is joined with the singular, ver. 137, and Psal. cxxxiii*. And it is fitly here spoken of as *one*, opposed to all varieties and multitudes of things beside. *Thy commandment*, each linked to one another, and that one chain reaches beyond all the incoherent perfections in the world, if one were added to another, and drawn to a length. This *commandment is exceeding broad;* the very *breadth* immense, and therefore the *length*

* Deum tradunt Hebræi, unâ voce, eloquio uno, *hoc est*, uno spiritu et halitu, sine ullâ interspiratione, morâ, pausâ, vel distinctione, ita ut omnia verba, tanquam verbum unum, et vox una, fuerant, elocutum. Atque hinc volunt duplicem illam accentuum rationem in Decalogo ortam, ut altera una, illa Dei continuata elocutio, altera hominum tarda et distincta, judicetur.

must be much more so, no end of it. That good to which it leads and joins the soul, is enough for it: it is complete and full in its nature, and endless in its continuance, so that there is no measuring, no end of it any way. But all other *perfections* have their bounds of being and period of duration, so that each way an end is to be found of them. Now, in this, the opposition is the more admirable, that he speaks not expressly of the enjoyment of God, but of the commandment of God: he extols that above all the perfections of the world. Which is much to be remarked, as having in it a clear character of the purest and highest love. It had been more obvious to all had he said, I have seen the utmost of all besides Thee, but Thou, O God, the light of Thy countenance, the blessed vision of Thy face, that alone is boundless and endless happiness. Or, to have taken it below the full perfect enjoyment of glory, but some glances let into the soul here, a comfortable word from God, a look of love, Oh, how far surpassing all the continued caresses and delights of the world! He speaks not of that neither, but, *Thy commandment is exceeding broad.* As the Apostle says, *The foolishness of God is wiser than men's wisdom,* 1 Cor. i. 25; so here, that of God, which seems lowest and hardest, is infinitely beyond whatsoever is highest and sweetest in the world. The obeying of His commands, His very service, is more profitable than the world's rewards; His commands more excellent than the perfection of the world's enjoyments. To be subject to Him, is truer happiness than to command the whole world. Pure love reckons thus, Though no further reward were to follow, obedience to God, the perfection of His creature and its very happiness, carries its full recompense in its own bosom. Yea, love delights most in the hardest services. It is self-love to love the embraces and rest of love; but it is love to Him indeed, to love the labour of love, and the service of it, and that, not so much because it leads to rest, and ends in it, but because it is service to Him whom we love. Yea, that labour is in itself a rest, it is so natural and sweet to a soul that loves. As the revolution of

the heavens, which is a motion in rest, and rest in motion, changes not place, though running still; so the motion of love is truly Heavenly, and circular still in God, beginning in Him, and ending in Him, and so, not ending, but still moving without weariness.

Let us see what the commandment is, and that will clear it, for it is nothing but love. All is in that one, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart*, &c. So, the *command* that is here called so broad, is *love*. There is no measuring that, for its object is immeasurable. We readily exceed in the love of any other thing; but in the love of God, there is no danger of exceeding. Its true measure is, to know no measure.

According as the love is, so is the soul: it is made like to, yea, it is made one with, that which it loves. *Si terram amas, terra es; Si Deum amas, quid vis ut dicam, Deus es?* [Augustine.] By loving gross, base things, it becomes gross, and turns to flesh, or earth; and so, by the love of God, it is made divine, is one with Him. So, this is the excellency of the command enjoining love. God hath a good-will to all His creatures; but that He should make a creature capable of loving Him, and appoint this for His command, Oh! herein His goodness shines brightest. Now, though fallen from this, we are again invited to it; though degenerated and accursed in our sinful nature, yet we are renewed in Christ, and this command is renewed in him, and a new way of fulfilling it is pointed out.

This *command is broad*. There is room enough for the soul in God, that is hampered and pinched in all other things. Here, *love with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength*. Stretch it to the utmost; there is enough for it here, while it must contract and draw itself to other things. *I will walk at liberty*, says David, *for I seek Thy precepts*. That which perverse nature judges thraldom, once truly known, is only freedom. This is because the law is love, and such a love as brings full content to the

soul. Man hath not an object of love besides God,—too many he hath that can torment and trouble him, but not one that by being loved by him, satisfies and quiets him. Whether he loves things without him, or himself, still he is pained and restless. All other things he loves naturally, in reference to himself; but himself is not a sufficient object for him. It must be something that adds to, and perfects his nature, to which he must be united in love; somewhat higher than himself, yea, the highest of all, the Father of Spirits. That alone completes a spirit and blesses it, to love Him, the Spring of spirits.

Now this love, as including obedience to His commands, is a thing in itself due, and expressly commanded too. This is the thing which surpasses all pursuits and all enjoyments under heaven, not only to be loved of God, but to love Him. Yea, could these be severed, this rather would be the deformity and misery of the creature, to hate Him: this is the hell of hell.

And to love Him, not only with complacency, a desire to enjoy Him, but, moreover, wishing Him glory, doing Him service, desiring He may be honoured by all His creatures, and endeavouring ourselves to honour Him, that is our work; applauding the praises of angels and all creatures, and adding ours, (as Psal. ciii. 22) sweet, willing, entire submission to His will, ready to do, to suffer any thing for Him. Oh! away all base, muddy pleasures, all false night-shows of earthly glories, all high attempts and heroic virtues! These have their measure and their close, and prove in the end but lies. This command, this love alone, is the endless perfection and delight of souls, which begins here, and is completed above. The happiness of glory is, the perfection of holiness: that is the full beauty and loveliness of the Spouse, the Lamb's wife.

Oh! how much are the multitudes of men to be pitied, who are hunting they know not what, still pursuing content, and it still flying before, and they at as great a distance as when they promised themselves to lay hold on it! It is strange what men

are doing. *Ephraim feedeth on the wind.* Hos. xii. 1. The most serious designs of men are more foolish than the plays of children; all the difference is, that these are *tristes ineptiæ,* sourer and more sad trifles.

Oh, that ye would turn this way, and not still lay out your *money for that which is not bread!* You would find the saddest part of a spiritual course of life hath under it more true sweetness than all your empty mirths, which sound much, and are nothing, like the *crackling of thorns under the pot.* There is more joy in enduring a cross for God, than in the smiles of the world; in a private, despised affliction, without the name of suffering for His cause, or any thing in it like martyrdom, but only as coming from His hand, kissing it, and bearing it patiently, yea, gladly for His sake, out of love to Him, because it is His will so to try thee. What can come amiss to a soul thus composed?

I wish that even they who have renounced the vain world, and have the face of their hearts turned Godwards, would learn more this happy life, and enjoy it more, not to hang so much upon sensible comforts, as to delight in obedience, and to wait for those at His pleasure, whether He gives much or little, any or none. Learn to be still finding the sweetness of His commands, which no outward or inward change can disrelish, rejoicing in the actings of that Divine love within thee. Continue thy conflicts with sin, and though thou mayest at times be foiled, yet, cry to Him for help, and getting up, redouble thy hatred of it and attempts against it. Still stir this flame of God. That will overcome: *Many waters cannot quench it.* It is a renewed pleasure, to be offering up thyself every day to God. Oh! the sweetest life in the world is, to be crossing thyself, to please Him; trampling on thy own will to follow His.

SERMON XXII.

HABAKKUK iii. 17, 18.

Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls:

Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

MOST men's industries and employments are chiefly without them, but certainly our main and worthiest business lies within us; nor is ever a man fit for the varieties and vicissitudes of time and affairs without, till he have taken some pains to some good purpose within himself. A distempered, discomposed mind is as a limb out of joint, which is fit for no action, and moves both deformedly and painfully. That which we have to do, my brethren, for which these our meetings are commanded of God, and should be attended by us, and which we should follow out when we are gone from hence, is this, the reducing of our souls to God. Their disunion from Him is their disjointing, and they are never right till they refix on Him; and being there, they are so right, that nothing can come wrong to them. As they are not readily ensnared with ease and plenty, so, neither are they lightly astonished with want and trouble, but, in the ebb of all other comforts, they can hold the Prophet's purpose, to *joy in the Lord, and rejoice in the God of their salvation.*

This we may hear and speak of, but truly few attain it. I fear many of us are not so much as seeking after it and aspiring to it. A soul really conversant with God, is taken up with Him, all its affections work and move towards Him, as the Prophet's here; his *fear*, his *joy*, his *trust*, verses 16—19. This is a prayer, as it is entitled, but it is both a prophetical

and an unusual one; a *prophecy* and a *song*, as the word added imports, *of Habakkuk the prophet on Neginoth.* The strain of it is high, and full of sudden raptures and changes, as that word signifies; as here, having expressed much fear in the foregoing words, a shivering, trembling horror, he yet adds such a height of an invincible kind of joy,—like the needle of the compass, fixedly looking towards Him, yet not without a trembling motion. Thus, we have the temper of the Psalmist, Psalm ii. 11. *Rejoice with trembling.* Which suits well to so sublime an object; joying in God, because He is *good*, yet with joy still mixed with holy awe, because He is *great.* And this especially in a time of great judgments, or in the lively apprehensions or representations of them, whether before or after their inflicting; whether they be on the people of God for their iniquities, or on the enemies of God for their oppressions and cruelties to His people while He made them instruments for their correction. In both, God is formidable, and *greatly to be feared*, even by those that are nearest to Him. This we find in the prophets, when seeing judgments afar off, long before their day, which they had commission to denounce. So, this prophet here not only discovers great awe and fear at what he saw and foretold concerning God's own people, the Jews, but at the after-reckoning with the Chaldeans, His and their enemies. When God comes to do judgment on the wicked, this will make them who stand by and suffer not with them, yet to tremble: yea, such as are advantaged by it, as usually the people of God are, their enemies' ruin proving their deliverance. The majesty and greatness of God, and the terribleness of His march towards them and seizing on them, as it is here highly set forth, this works an awful fear in the hearts of His own children. They cannot see their Father angry but it makes them quake, though it be not against them, but on their behalf. And this were our right temper, when we see or hear of the hand of God against wicked men, who run their own courses against all warning? —not to entertain these things with carnal rejoicings and light-

ness of mind, or with boasting insults; to applaud indeed the righteousness of God, and to give Him His glory, but withal, to fear before Him, though they were strangers, and no way a part of ourselves, and to have a humble sense of the Lord's dealing in it (so Psal. lii. 6.); and to learn to reverence God; *in all our ways to acknowledge Him;* to be sure to take Him along with us, and to undertake nothing without Him.

And this fear of judgments falling upon others, is the way not to feel them on ourselves. When God sees that the sound of the rod on others' backs will humble a soul or a people, He will spare the stroke of it. They who have most of this holy fear of God's anger, fall least under the dint of it. *Blessed is he that feareth always; but he that hardens his heart, shall fall into mischief.* Prov. xxviii. 14. He that fears it not, shall fall into it; he that fears and trembles at it, shall escape. So the Prophet here trusts for himself: verse 16. *I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble,* and, upon this confidence, he rises to this high resolution, *Yet I will rejoice in the Lord.*

The words, to make no other division of them, are a conjuncture of a *sad supposition,* and a *cheerful position,* or *purpose.*

Although the fig-tree shall not blossom.] This is a thing that may come, and possibly, which the Prophet did foresee would come, amongst other judgments; and it is of all other outward scourges the sorest, most smarting, and most sweeping; cuts off most people, and can least be suffered and shifted. It lieth amongst the rest in the store-house of Divine judgments. He who furnished the earth, and gave being by the word of His mouth to all these things, hath still the sole, absolute power of them: they obey his word of command, and, rightly looked upon, in our use of them, and the sweetness we find in them, lead us to Him as the spring of being and goodness. He is invisible in his nature; in his works, most visible and legible. Not only the spacious heavens and the glorious lights in them, but the meanest things on earth, every

plant and flower in their being and growing, yea, every pile of grass, declare God to us.

And it is a supernatural delight in natural things, to see and taste Him in them. It is more pleasant than their natural relish; it is the chief inner sweetness, the kernel and marrow of all; and they that take not the pains, and have not the skill to draw it forth, lose the far better half of their enjoyments, even of the things of this earth. To think how wise he is who devised such a frame, how powerful he who made all these things, how rich he must be who still continues to furnish the earth with these varieties of provisions, how sweet must he be, whence all these things draw their sweetness! But, alas! we are brutish, and in our use of these things, we differ little or nothing from the beast. We are called to a higher life, but we live it not. *Man is in honour, but he understands it not; he is as the beast that perishes.* Psalm xlix. 20.

Now, because we acknowledge God so little in the use of these things, therefore he is put to it, so to speak, to teach us our lesson in the want and deprivement of them, which our dulness is more sensible of. We know things a great deal better by wanting them, than by having them, and take more notice of that hand which hath power of them, when he withdraws, than when he bestows them.

Besides all other provocations, and particular abuses of these things by intemperance and luxury, were it no more than the very neglecting of God in his goodness, this calls for a famine, to diet us into wiser thoughts, and to remind us of our own and all other creatures' dependence on that God whom we so forget, as to serve our idols and base lusts upon his bounty. This was the case of Judah and Israel. See Hos. ii. 8—13. But when more sparingly fed, and better taught, *in the wilderness*, those mercies were restored again, and then all acknowledge the dowry of that blessed marriage with himself, which is so far beyond all account. Verses 14—16.

How wretched ingratitude is it, not to regard and love Him in the use of all His mercies! But it is horrid stupidity, not to consider and seek to Him in their withdrawment, or in the threatening of it. Few have a right sense of His hand in any thing. They grumble and cry out, but not to Him. As in the case of oppression, it is said, Job xxxv. 9, 10. *By reason of the multitude of oppressions, they make the oppressed to cry; they cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty; but none saith, Where is God my maker?*—so, of this very judgment of famine, the Prophet speaks, Hos. vii. 14. *And they have not cried unto me with their hearts, when they howled upon their beds: they assemble themselves for corn and wine, and they rebel against me.* They did not humbly and repentingly seek to God by prayer, but a natural, brutish sense of their wants pressed out complaints; they howled as a hungry dog would do for bread. This is all the most do, in years of dearth, or harvests threatening it. No beast in the mountain or wilderness is so untamed as the heart of man, which, when catched in God's judgments, lies and cries as a wild bull in a net. It is true, they are somewhat nearer sober thoughts in distress; and their grief, though merely natural, yet, is nearer spiritual grief, than their mirth and laughter; but it must have a touch of that Spirit above, to make it spiritual, to make it change to gold, to turn it to godly sorrow. No scourge carries a power of changing the heart with it; that is a superadded work. Many people, and particular persons, have been beat as in a mortar with variety of afflictions, one coming thick upon another, and yet, are never the wiser, and yet, *have not returned unto me, saith the Lord.*

Therefore, if you be afflicted, join prayer with your correction, and beg by it, that God would join His Spirit with it. Seek this in earnest, else you shall be not a whit the better, but shall still endure the smart, and not reap the fruit thereof. Yea, I believe, some are the worse, even by falsely imagining they are better, partly presuming it must be so, and partly, may be, feeling some present motions and meltings in the time

of afflictions, which evanish and presently cool when they are off the fire. Ay, but these two together make a happy man; *Blessed is he whom thou correctest, and teachest out of Thy law.* Psal. xciv. 12.

Although the fig-tree shall not blossom.] This sometimes does, and at any time may, befall a land; but however, it is very useful to put such cases. It is true, there is great odds betwixt real and imagined distresses; yet, certainly, the frequent viewing of its picture, though it is only in thy imagination, hath so much likeness as somewhat abates the strangeness and frightfulness of its true visage when it comes.

There is a foolish pre-apprehension of possible evils, which, whether they come or not, does no good, but makes evils to come perplexingly beforehand, and antedates their misery, and adds the pain of many others that will never come. These are the fumes of a dark, distempered humour, vain fears, which vex and trouble some minds at present, and do not waste anything of any grief to come after. But calmly and composedly to sit down and consider evil days coming, any kind of trials that probably, yea, or possibly, may arrive, so as to be ready to entertain them without astonishment,—this is a wise and useful exercise of the mind, and takes off much of the weight of such things, breaks them in falling on us, that they come not so sad down, when they light first upon the apprehension. Thus, it is true, nothing comes unawares to a wise man. He hath supposed all, or as bad as anything that can come, hath acquainted his mind with the horridest shapes, and therefore, when such things appear, will not so readily start at them.

This I would advise to be done, not only in things we can more easily suffer, but in those we think would prove hardest and most indigestible, to inure thy heart to them; not to be like some, who are so tender-fancied, that they dare not so much as think of some things, the death of a dear friend, or husband, or wife, or child. That is oftener to be viewed, rather than any other event. Bring thy mind to it, as a

starting horse to that whereat it does most startle—What if I should be bereft of such a person, such a thing? This would make it much more tolerable when thou art put to it. What if the place where I live were visited with all at once, in some degree, pestilence, and sword, and famine? How should I look on them? Could my mind keep its own place and standing, fixed on God in such a case? What if I were turned out of my good furniture and warm house, and stripped not only of accessory, but necessary things; (as here he supposes not only the failing of delicacies, the fig-trees, wine, and olives, but of common necessary food, the fields not yielding meat, and the flocks cut off:) thy little ones crying for bread, and thou hast none for them? You little know what the tenderest and delicatest among you may be put to. These times have given many real instances, within these kingdoms, of strange changes in the condition of all ranks of persons. Or think, if thou abhorrest that, What if I were smitten with blotches or loathsome sores on my flesh, or if, by any accident, I should lose an arm, or an eye, or both eyes? What if extreme poverty, and sickness, and forsaking of friends, come all at once? Could I welcome these, and make up all in God,—find riches, and friends, and fulness in Him? Most men, if they would speak truly to such cases, must declare them insufferable: I were undone if such a thing befell me, or such a comfort were taken from me. Most would cry out, as Micah did, Judg. xviii. 24, *Ye have taken away my gods;* for so are these things our hearts cleave to and principally delight in. He that worships mammon, his purse is the sensiblest piece of him: he is broke, if fire, or ravage of war, throw him out of his nest, and empty it. He that makes his *belly his god,* (such they are the Apostle speaks of, Phil. iii. 19,) how could he endure this case the Prophet puts here, the failing of vines, of flocks and herds?

It were good to add to the supposition of want, somewhat of the reality of it; sometimes to abridge thyself of things thou desirest and lovest, to inure thy appetite to a refusal

of what it calls for; to practise somewhat of poverty, to learn to need few things.

It is strange, men should be so foolish as to tie themselves to these things, which have neither satisfying content in them, nor certain abode. And *why shouldst thou set thine eyes on things which are not*, says Solomon, Prov. xxiii. 5,—a *nonens*, a fancy? How soon may you be parted? He who is the true God, God alone, how soon can He pull the false gods from you, or you from them!—as in that word, Job. xxvii. 8, *What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?* Like that case in the parable, Luke xii. 19. *Soul, take thine ease.* A strange inference from full barns! That were sufficient provision for a horse, a fit happiness for it: but for a soul, though it were to stay, how gross and base a portion! But it cannot say neither: *This night thy soul shall be required of thee.*

The only firm position is this of the Prophet, *Yet will I rejoice in the Lord.* And such times indeed are fit to give proof of this, to tell thee whether it be so indeed, where thy heart is built. While thy honour, and wealth, and friends are about thee, it is hard to know whether these props bear thee up, or another, an Invisible supporter; but when these are plucked away, and thou art destitute round about, then it will appear if thy strength be in God, if these other things were but flourishes about thee, and thou laidst no weight on them at all. He that leans on these, must fall when these fall, and his *hope is cut off*, and his *trust as a spider's web. He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand.* Job viii. 14, 15. They that clasp their hearts about their houses or estates, within a while they are either sadly pulled asunder, or swept away together.

But, Oh! the blessed, the high condition of a soul set on God, untied, independent from all things beside Him, its whole dependence and rest placed on Him alone, sitting loose to all the world, and so not stirred with alterations! Yea, amid the turnings upside-down of human things, if the frame of the

heaven and earth were falling to pieces*, the heart founded on Him who made it, abides unmoved; *the everlasting arms are under* it, and bear it up.

Do ye believe, my brethren, that there is such a thing, that it is no fancy? Yea, all is but fancy beside it. Do you believe this? Why, then, is one day after another put off, and this not attained, nor the soul so much as entered or engaged to a serious endeavour after it, looking on all things else, compared to this noble design, as vanity? How often and how easily are their joys damped, who rejoice in other things, and their hopes broken! What they expected most, soon proves a lie, as the word spoken of the *olive* here signifies; as if the *labour* of it should *lie* (*spem mentita seges,*)—a fair vintage or harvest promised, and either withered with drought, or drowned with rain: indeed, it lies at the best! But the soul that places its joy on God, is still fresh and green when all are withered about it. Jer. xvii. 8. *Acquaint thyself with Him* betimes in ease. It is a sad case, to be making acquaintance with Him, when thou shouldest most make use of His friendship, and find comfort in His love.

Now, this joy in God cannot remain in an impure, unholy soul, no more than Heaven and Hell can mix together. An impure, unholy soul, I call not that which is stained with sin, for no other are under the sun; all must then quit all pretensions to that estate; but such a one as willingly entertains any sinful lust or way of wickedness. That delight and this are directly opposite. And certainly, the more the soul is refined from all delights of sin, yea, even from sinless delights of sense and of this present world, it hath the more capacity, the fitter and the larger room, for this pure, heavenly delight.

No language can make a natural man understand what this thing is, *to rejoice in God.* Oh! it is a mystery. Most men mind poor childish things, laughing and crying in a breath, at trifles; easily puffed up, and as easily cast down. But even

* Si fractus illabatur orbis.

the children of God are too little acquainted with this their portion. Which of you find this power in the remembrance of God, that it doth overflow and drown all other things, both your worldly joys and worldly sorrows, that you find them not? And thus it would be, if we knew Him. Is He then our Father, and yet we know Him not?

Although all should fail, yet, rejoice in Him who fails not, who alters not. He is still the same in Himself, and to the sense of the soul that is knit to Him, is then sweetest when the world is bitterest. When other comforts are withdrawn, the loss of them brings this great gain, so much the more of God and His love imparted, to make all up. They that ever found this, could almost wish for things that others are afraid of. If we knew how to improve them, His sharpest visits would be His sweetest: thou wouldst be glad to catch a kiss of His hand while He is beating thee, or pulling away something from thee that thou lovest, and bless Him while He is doing so.

Rejoice in God, although the fig-tree blossom not, &c. Yea, rejoice in these hardest things, as His doing. A heart rejoicing in him, delights in all His will, and is surely provided for the most firm joy in all estates; for if nothing can come to pass beside, or against, His will, then cannot that soul be vexed which delights in Him, and hath no will but His, but follows Him in all times, in all estates, not only when He shines bright on them, but when they are clouded. That flower which follows the sun, doth so even in cloudy days: when it doth not shine forth, yet it follows the hidden course and motion of it. So, the soul that moves after God, keeps that course when He hides His face; is content, yea, is glad at His will in all estates, or conditions, or events. And though not only all be withered and blasted without, but the face of the soul little better within to sense, no flourishing of graces for the present, yet, it rejoices in Him, and in that everlasting covenant that still holds, *ordered in all things and sure*, as the sweet singer of Israel sweetly expresses it, 2 Sam. xxv. 5. *For*

this, says he, *is all my salvation, and all my desire*, ALTHOUGH *He make it not to grow.* That is a strange *although*, and yet is he satisfied even in that.

This joy in God, as *my God, the God of my salvation*, ought to exercise the soul in the darkest and worst times; and it ought to stick to it, not to let go this confidence, still expecting salvation from Him, and resting on Him for it, though not having those senses and assurances that thou desirest. This, weak believers are easily beaten from, by temptation. But we are to stand to our right in Him, even when we see it not. And when it is said to thee, as in Psalm iii., that *there is no help for thee in God*, tell all that say so, they lie: *He is my God, my glory, and the lifter up of my head;* as there he speaks.

Rejoice in Him still as *thy* God; and, however, rejoice in him as GOD. *I will rejoice in Jehovah*, glad that He is God, that His enemies cannot unsettle nor reach His throne, that He rules, and is glorious in all things, that He is self-blessed, and needs nothing. This is the purest and highest kind of rejoicing in Him, and is certainly more distant and most free from alteration, and hath, indeed, most of Heaven in it.

SERMON XXIII.

1 Cor. i. 30.

But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

THE great design of the Gospel is, to bring men to Jesus Christ; and, next to that, to instruct those who are brought to him, in the clearest knowledge, and to keep them in the fresh remembrance of the privileges and happiness they have in him. This the Apostles, writing to new converts, much

insist upon, and Paul most abundantly; but nowhere more excellently and fully than in these words.

As that is a great and much-commended oracle, γνῶθι σεαυτόν, *Know thyself*, so also, there can be nothing more comfortable and profitable for a Christian than this point, to understand his new being, to know himself as out of himself in Christ, to study what he is there. Oh! what joy, what humility, what holiness would it work, were we well seen and much conversant in this subject, viewing ourselves in this light, as here the Apostle represents a believer to himself, *Of him are ye in Christ Jesus*, &c.

If we look back a little, we see his aim is, to vindicate the doctrine of Christ from contempt in that chief point which is the believer's greatest comfort and glory, yet lies openest to the world's misprision, the doctrine of the cross, *Christ crucified.* Him we preach, says he, let men take it as they please: be he a *stumbling-block to the Jews*, and *foolishness to the Gentiles*, yet, *to them that believe* among both, he is *the power of God, and the wisdom of God.*

As, in the person of Christ, glory was wrapt up in meanness, so it was in his sufferings and death. And in the doctrine of it, and in the way of preaching of it, they are not drest with *human wisdom*, or *excellency of speech:* this would be as incongruous as that rich, gaudy attire they cover the image of the Virgin with, and her Child lying in a stable. And that all might be suitable, so is it in the persons of those that believe on him. *Brethren, you see your calling, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.* And God's purpose in this is, *that no flesh should glory before Him.*

This is the grand disease of flesh, to swell in conceit of any little advantages, real or imagined, forgetting itself and Him from whom it receives all, receives its very self, the being it hath, and all superadded good. Now, God is pleased, in justice on some, and in great mercy to others, so to order most things in the world, as to allay this tumour; often bringing

down high things, and raising the low, and so attempering and levelling disparities, as to take men off from self-glorying. Proud undertakings, we see, are commonly most disgracefully broken. Nor is there any surer presage of the speedy ruin of any affairs or persons, than presumptuous boasting. This is God's work amongst men, as even natural men have observed, to abase high things, to exalt low things. He goes from one thing to another, pulling down the crest and blasting the glory of all human excellency, breaking the likeliest projects, and effecting what is least to be expected, *withdrawing man from his purpose, to hide pride from his eyes*, as Elihu speaks, Job xxxiii. 17. To this purpose, see Job x. 11, 12; 1 Sam. ii. 4, 5; and the virgin in her song, Luke i. 51. Whatsoever men bear themselves big upon, and begin to glory in, they call the hand of God to crush it, raising an idol of jealousy in his sight. All high things have their day: *the day of the Lord shall be on all the cedars of Lebanon, and He alone exalted.* Isaiah ii. 13, 17. If ever this was the case in any time, we may see it is legible in ours in great letters. This is the very result of his ways, staining the pride of all glory, defeating witty counsels, making counsellors mad, throwing down all plumes and trampling them in the mire, that no party or persons in the kingdom can set out for any triumph of courage, or wit, or any other excellency, but somewhat shall be clearly seen to meet and dash it in pieces, *that no flesh may glory before Him.* And this, to souls that love God, is the main happiness of the times, and that wherein they will chiefly rejoice.

The particular here spoken of, is eminently suited to this end, the choice and calling of persons to the dignity of Christians: *Not many wise, not many mighty, or noble*, but *the mean things, the foolish things*, and the most insignificant, *things that are not, non-entia*, very nothings, to annul things that seem most to be something. Thus it was in the first times; and though afterwards, by means of these meaner persons, greater were caught and drawn into Christ, philosophers

and kings, yet still it remains true in all times, that predominantly the choice is of the meaner sort; God testifying how little he esteems those things which men account great. Those endowments of wit and eloquence which men admire in some, alas! how poor are they to him! He respecteth not any who are wise in heart: they are nothing, and less than nothing in his eyes. He is the author of all these. *Will He esteem thy riches? No, not gold, nor all the forces of strength.* Job xxxvi. 19. Even wise men admire how little it is that men know, how small a matter lies under the sound of those popular wonders, a learned man, a great scholar, a great statesman; how much more doth the all-wise God meanly account of these! He often discovers, even to the world, their meanness; He befools them. So, valour, or birth, or worldly greatness, these he gives, and gives as things he makes no great reckoning of, to such as shall never see his face; and calls to the inheritance of glory poor despised creatures, who are looked on as the offscourings and refuse of the world; these are *raised from the dunghill*, and *set with princes*, made *the sons and daughters of God*, entitled each of them to *a crown that fades not.* Oh the wonder!

Now, they are not puffed up with this, but the more assurance they have, and the clearer their view is of the state they are called to, the more humble they are; still laying these together. What was I in myself? and, What am I in Christ? And, in comparing these, they are swallowed up with amazement at that love which made this change; and for this very end doth the Apostle express thus their estate, *Ye are of Him in Christ Jesus.*

This is a new being, a creation; for, in relation to this being, we are nothing in our state of nature; and then, considering that in relation to others, the meanest are often chosen and made partakers of this being, such as have nothing naturally great of nobility, or morality, or high intellectuals; the most nothings are often chosen and made partakers of this being, to illustrate the power of Him who makes them exist.

In kings, somewhat may be observed of this in their choice of favourites, and raising men who are not of highest deserving, as affecting to shew their freedom in choice, and their power in making out of nothing, and so they love to have them called their creatures. But these are but shadows: both are poor creatures, both are easily thrown down. But God doth indeed shew, in His choice, His freedom and power in his new creature: He draws them out of the lowest bottom of nothing, and raises them to the most excellent kind of being that creatures are capable of, to be *the sons of God, and so heirs, joint heirs with Christ Jesus.* Rom. viii. 17.

Ye are of Him in Christ Jesus.] This must be taken in an eminent sense. All the creatures are *of God;* but Man, even in his first creation, for the dignity of his being, and the slow way of forming him, was accounted to be *of God*, in a peculiar manner; formed to His own likeness, and therefore called *the son of God*, called *His offspring.* Acts xvii. 28. But in this new being much more are we so: we are *of Him* as His children, partakers of the Divine nature, and that so fastened, that it abideth. And the medium of this excellent and permanent being is primarily to be considered; for in him it becomes so. It is both high and firm, being in the essential Son, as the foundation of it; therefore here expressed, as bearing the whole weight of this happy fabric.

Of Him ye are in Christ Jesus. The life which believers derive from God, is through *Him.* He is that eternal Word, by which all things were made in their first creation, and do still subsist. Heb. i.; John i. And he is made the basis of the second creation, in a wonderful way, becoming himself a creature; and so, the root of the new progeny is from Heaven, *the sons of God:* so it follows in both these cited scriptures. John i. 12—14. *The Word was made flesh*, and so, they that *receive Him* are made *the sons of God.* And so, Heb. ii. 10, 11, amply and excellently is that mystery unfolded. The first frame of man, at least the excellency and beauty of it, was broken by his fall; therefore, a new model is framed of a

selected number, to be a new world, more firm than the former, united unto God so close, as never to be severed again. Man, though he was made holy and God-like, continued not in that honour. Now, God Himself becomes a man, to make all sure: that is the foundation of an indissoluble union. Man is knit to God in the person of Christ so close, that there is no possibility of dividing them any more; and this union of our nature in his person, is made the ground of the union of our persons with God. We find our own flesh catch hold in Christ of a man, and in that man may find God, and are made one with Him by faith in Christ. And this all the powers of hell cannot dissolve. Our life none can cut off from His, more than a man can cut a beam from off the sun. We are and subsist of God in Christ. This is an unknown mystery, but, were it known, it would prove a depth of rich, inexhaustible consolation. The world doth not know what Christians are. This is no wonder; for truly they know not themselves, or but very little. How would it elevate their spirits, but not in pride! Oh! nothing is more humbling than this, as the Apostle here implies. But it would raise them above the world, and suit their desires and their actions to their condition, having all under foot that the world accounts great, walking as heirs of Heaven, led and moved by the spirit of Christ in them; thinking, when solicited to any base way, How doth this become the sons of God? Shall one who lives in Christ, degrade Him so much, as to borrow comfort or pleasure from any sin, for the killing and destruction whereof He laid down His precious life?

Oh, my brethren, that this Divine ambition were kindled in your breasts, to partake of this high and happy being, and leave all your pursuits to follow this, restless till you be in Christ! For solid, abiding rest, sure I am, out of him there is none. And then, being in him, remember where you are, and what you are. *Walk in Christ*, and live like him, as one with him indeed: let his thoughts and desires be yours. What was his work, yea, what his refreshment, his meat and

drink? To do his Father's will. Oh! when shall we find ourselves so minded, as the Apostle's word is, *the same mind in us that was in Christ.*

Who of God is made unto us wisdom.] *Known unto God are all His works from the beginning.* It was not an accidental after-device in God (for in Him there can be no such thing), but was his great fore-thought project, out of the ruins of man's first estate, to raise a fairer and firmer fabric, new from the very foundation. And in the new foundation lies the model, and excellency, and stability of the whole structure. This is the choicest of all his works, wherein he chiefly glories; his master-piece, which great angels admire; and this is it, *Who of God is made unto us, wisdom.* And this is one letter of His name. He is called *Wonderful*, who is here spoken of; so all is wonderful in this work: *wonderful*, first, that He should be *made* anything, the Maker of all things himself made something which before he was not; then, *made to us*—that he should be made anything to *our* interest and advantage, who are a company of traitors; and *made unto us of God*, the God against whom we rebelled, and continued naturally enemies! The purpose was bred in the Father's own breast, to give out his Son, from thence to recover us and bring us back. Oh, astonishing depth of love! Then, *made unto us* what? Rather, what not? We are made up in him for ever rich and happy; he being made all unto us, all we need, or can desire, *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.* Without him we are undone, forlorn caitiffs, masses of misery, as you say, having nothing either *in us or on us*, nothing but poverty and wretchedness, blindness and nakedness, altogether ignorant of the way to happiness, yea, ignorant of our very misery; a nest of fools, natural fools, children of folly (as they who are renewed by, and provided with, this wisdom, are called *children of wisdom*), guilty, filthy, condemned slaves.

This is the goodly posture we are in, out of Christ; yet who is sensible of it? How few can be brought to serious

thoughts about it! Nay, are not the most, in the midst of this misery, yet full of high conceits of their worth, wit, freedom, *&c.?* As frantic bedlamites, lying naked and filthy in their chains, yet dream they are great and wise persons, commanding and ordering all about them, fancying, possibly, that they are kings, a stick in their hands a sceptre, and their iron chains of gold. This is a pleasing madness for the time; yet who does not pity it that looks on?

Methinks I see one of this sort, when I see one evidently destitute of Christ, bearing himself big upon the fancy of his parts, and birth, and riches, or stoutness; see such, upon any cross word, swelling against others, threatening high, and protesting they will be slaves to none; not knowing that, even while they speak thus, they are wretched caitiffs, under the hardest and basest kind of slavery. Inquire, my brethren, if ever you had a right and clear view of your natural misery; otherwise you are, it is likely, still in it, and though you profess to believe in Christ, are not yet gone out of yourselves to him, and not knowing your great need of him, do certainly make little esteem and little use of him. *You are full, and reign without him;* all is well and in quiet; but it is owing to the *strong man's* yet possessing the house, and keeping you captives as quiet as he can, that you look not out, or cry for a deliverer. He is afraid of him, to be dispossessed and turned out by him who is stronger, the mighty Redeemer that came out of Zion. Oh, that many amongst you were crying to him and waiting for him, to come unto you for your rescue!

Made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.] To supply and help all, He is our magazine whither to have recourse to: for this end, he is replenished with *all the fulness of God*, the very *fulness of the Godhead dwelling in Him, the Spirit being not given to Him by measure.* He is fit to be *made our wisdom,* who is *the wisdom of the Father;* as here in this place, the Apostle lately called him, *the wisdom of God. In him are hid all the treasures*

of wisdom and knowledge, Col. ii. 3. They that find him, and come unto him, find it so; but the most look but on the surface; they hear his name, and know not what is under it.

Made unto us righteousness.] By fulfilling the whole law, and *all righteousness*, Matt. iii. 15, and yet, suffering the rigour of it, as if he had transgressed it. No guile, no spot was found on him: he was *holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners*, and yet, the greatest sinner by imputation: *The Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all*, Isa. liii. 6. And so, Psalm xl. 12, which is prophesied of him: *Mine iniquities have taken hold of me.* He owns them as *his*, though not his. He endured all that justice could require, entered and paid the debt, and is acquitted and set free again, and *exalted at the right hand of God.* So, it is evident that he is *righteous*, even in that representative and sponsional person he put on.

Sanctification.] Christ is a living spring of that; *anointed above his fellows.* In him is no mixture of any iniquity. The Holy Ghost descended on the Apostles in the shape of fire; there was somewhat to be purged in them; they were to be quickened and enabled by it for their calling. But on him it descended *as a dove:* there was no need of cleansing or purging out anything. That was a symbol of the spotless purity of his nature, and of the fulness of the Spirit dwelling in him.

And redemption.] Christ is mighty to save, and having a right to save; a *kinsman*, a *brother.* And as he hath bought freedom for sinners, so he will put them in possession of it, will effect and complete it. All that are in him, are really delivered from the power of sin and death, and shall, ere long, be perfectly and fully so: they shall be lifted up above them, no longer to be molested with any remainders of either, or with the fear of them, or so much as any grief for them. And that day is called *the day of redemption*, to which

we are beforehand made sure and *sealed by the Spirit.*— Ephes. iv. 30.

We cannot then doubt of his fitness and fulness to be these, and these *for us;* but withal, we must know that he is designed so to be *made unto us,* and that he came, and did, and suffered all for this purpose, and having done, returned, and now lives to be these to us. It is his place and office, and so his delight; he loves to be put upon the performance of this, to be their *wisdom and righteousness. Made of God to us.* It is agreed betwixt the Father and him, that he should be so. He is *the wisdom of God,* and *made of God our wisdom.* Wonderful! that the same which is *His own wisdom,* and no less, he would *make ours.* And now, under a sense of all our ignorances and follies, it becomes us to go to him, to apply ourselves to him, and apply him to us. He is called our *Head,* and called so most fitly, for it is the place of all our wisdom; that lies in our head. And so, as to all the rest, *righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.* If he be *righteousness* in himself, and holy, and victor over his enemies, and set free from wrath and death, then are *we* so too in him; for he is *ours,* and so *ours,* that we become what he is, are inrighted to all he hath, and endowed with all his goods; though poor and base in ourselves, yet married to him: that is the title. We are made rich, and noble, and free, we are righteous and holy, because *he* is. *Uxor fulget radiis mariti. The wife shines with the rays of her husband.* All debts and pleas are taken off, he stands betwixt us and all hazard, and in him we stand acquitted and justified before God.

That which makes up the match, and ties the knot of this union, is *faith. He is made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness,* &c. He is tendered and held out as all these, in the promise of the Gospel; not only declared to be really furnished and fit so to be, but offered to be so, and we warranted, yea, invited and intreated, to receive him as such. But he is effectually *made* to be this *to us, to me,* by believing, the pro-

mise being brought home and applied of God, and faith wrought in the heart to entertain and unite to him. Ἡ πίστις ἰσοποιεῖ: Faith closes the bargain, and makes him *ours*. Now, in that, he is *made unto us*, not *of ourselves*, but *God*, for that is His gift and work: we cannot believe, any more than we can fulfil the whole law. And though men think it a common and easy thing, to accept of so sweet an offer at so cheap a rate, nothing being required but to receive him, yet, this is a thing that naturally all refuse. *No man cometh*, says he, *except the Father draw him*. John vi. 44. Though men be beseeched to come, yet, the most *will not come unto* him, *that they may have life*. *To as many as received him, he gave the privilege to become the sons of God*, John i. 12; and yet, for all that, many did not receive him; yea, as there it is expressed, *He came to his own, but his own received him not*. They who were nearest to him in natural relation and interest, yet, refused him, for the most part, and attained not this blessed spiritual interest in him unto life.

It should be considered, my brethren, Christ is daily held out, and none are excluded or excepted, all are invited, be they what they will, who have need of him and use for him; and yet, who is persuaded? Oh, *who hath believed our report?* One hath his *farm*, another his *oxen*, each some engagement or another. Men are not at leisure for Christ. Why? You think, may be, you have received him. If it be so, you are happy. Be not deluded. Have you received him? Do you find him then living and ruling within you? Are your eyes upon him? Do you wait on him, early and late, to see what his will is? Is your soul glad in him? Can you, in distress, sickness, or poverty, clasp to him, and find him sweet, and allay all with this thought, However things go with me, yet, Christ is in me? Doth your heart cleave to him? Certainly, if he be in you, it will be thus; or, at least, your most earnest desire will be, that it may be thus.

Men will not believe how hard a matter it is, to believe the fulness and sufficiency of Jesus Christ, till they be put to it in

earnest to make use of him, and then they find it: when sin and death are set before their view, and discovered in their native colours unto the soul, when a man is driven to that, *What shall I do to be saved?* then, then is the time to know what notion he hath of Christ. And as the difficulty lies in this, in the first awakening of the conscience from sin, so, in after-times of temptation and apprehension of wrath, when, upon some new-added guiltiness, or a new sight of the old, in a frightful manner, *sin revives and the soul dies*, it is struck dead with the terrors of the law,—then to keep thy hold, and find another life in Christ, the law and justice satisfied, and so the conscience quieted in him; this is indeed to believe.

It is a thing of huge difficulty, to bring men to a sense of their natural misery, to see that they have need of a Saviour, and to look out for one: but then, being brought to that, it is no less, if not more difficult, to persuade them that Christ is he; that, as they have need of him, so they need no more, he being able and sufficient for them. All the waverings and fears of misbelieving minds do spring from dark and narrow apprehensions of Jesus Christ. All the doubt is, not of their interest, as they imagine: they who say so, and think it so, do not perceive the bottom and root of their own malady. They say, they do no whit doubt but that he is able enough, and his righteousness large enough, but that all the doubt is, *if he belong to me.* Now, I say, this doubt arises from a defect and doubt of the former, wherein you suspect it not. Why doubtest thou that he belongs to thee? Dost thou flee to him, as lost and undone in thyself? Dost thou renounce all that can be called thine, and seek thy life in him? Then he is thine. *He came to seek and to save that which was lost.* Oh, but I find so much, not only former, but still daily renewed and increasing guiltiness. Why, is he a sufficient Saviour, or is he not? If thou dost say, he is not, then it is manifest that here lies the defect and mistake. If thou sayest, he is, then hast thou answered all thy objections of that kind: much

guiltiness, much or little, old or new, neither helps nor hinders, as to thy interest in him and salvation by him. And for dispelling of these mists, nothing can be more effectual than the letting in of those Gospel beams, the clear expressions of his riches and fulness in the Scriptures, and eminently this, *Made of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.*

Wisdom. Both *objectively* and *effectively*. *Objectively*, I mean, our wisdom, as all our wisdom lies in the right knowledge and apprehension of him. And this suits to the Apostle's present discourse. The *Jews* would have *a sign*, and the *Gentiles, wisdom;* but *We*, says he, *preach Christ.* So, ch. ii. ver. 2. *I determined to know nothing, save Christ crucified.* He was learnedly bred, and knew many things beside, much of nature, and much of the law; but all this was to him obsolete, useless stuff: it was as if he never had heard of or known anything else but Jesus Christ. We may know other things, but this, and this alone, is our wisdom, *to know him, and him crucified.* Particularly, we may have knowledge of the law, and by it the knowledge of sin; but in relation to our standing before God, and so, our happiness, which is the greatest point of wisdom, Jesus Christ is alone, and is all. And the more firmly a soul eyes Christ, and loses all other knowledge and itself in contemplating him, the more truly wise and heavenly it is.

And *effectively* he is our wisdom. All our right knowledge of him and belief in him flow from himself, are derived from him, and sent into our souls. His Spirit is conveyed into ours; a beam of himself, as of the sun. This Sun of righteousness is not seen but by his own light; so that every soul that is made wise unto salvation, that is brought to apprehend Christ, to cleave to him, and repose on him, it is by an emission of Divine light from himself, that shews him, and leads unto him. And so we know God in him. There is no right knowledge of the Father but in the Son. God dwelling in the *man, Christ*, will be found or known no where else; and

they that consider and worship God out of Christ, do not know or worship the true God, but a false notion and fancy of their own.

The *Shechinah*, the *habitation of the Majesty*, is Jesus Christ: there He dwells as between the cherubims over the mercy-seat. To apprehend God so as to love Him and trust in Him all our life, to hope to find favour and bliss with Him, this is the only wise knowledge of Him. Now, this alone is in Christ, and from him. He contains this representation of God, and gives his own light to see it. So that a Christian's desire should be, in relation to Jesus Christ, that of David in reference to the Temple, as a figure of him, *One thing have I desired of Him, and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord;* that I may get in to Christ, to know God there, *to behold the beauty of the Lord.* There we see beauty indeed, the Father's glory, and so, as *our Father* reconciled to us, we see Him *merciful and gracious.* And as we should desire *to behold*, so, still, *to inquire in His Temple*, to advance in the knowledge of God, studying Him in Christ: we are to admire what we see, and to seek still to see more. And know, that this knowledge of God, as we have it *in Christ*, so it is *from him.* He reveals the Father: he came from His bosom for that purpose. We cannot believe on him, cannot come near God through him, but as he lets forth of his light, to conduct and lead us in, yea, powerfully to draw in, for his light does so. Now, knowing and apprehending him by his own light, his Spirit, the Apostle clears it, that this is our *wisdom*, by those rich titles added, according to which we find him to us, when we receive from him that wisdom by which we apprehend him aright and lay hold on him, then *made unto us righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.*

Righteousness. This doubtless is meant of the righteousness by which we are justified before God. And he is *made this to us:* applied by faith, *His* righteousness becomes *ours.* That exchange made, our sins are laid over upon him, and his

obedience put upon us. This is the great glad tidings, that we are made righteous by Christ. It is not a righteousness wrought by us, but given to us, and put upon us. This, carnal reason cannot comprehend, and being proud, therefore rejects and argues against it; says, *How can this thing be?* But faith closes with it, and rejoices in it. Without either doing or suffering, the sinner is acquitted and justified, and stands as guiltless of breach, yea, as having fulfilled the whole law. And happy they who thus fasten upon this righteousness! They may lift up their faces with gladness and boldness before God; whereas the most industrious, self-saving justiciary, though in other men's eyes and his own, possibly, for the present, he makes a glittering shew, yet, when he shall come to be examined of God, and tried according to the Law, he shall be covered with shame, and confounded in his folly and guiltiness. But faith triumphs over self-unworthiness, and sin, and death, and the Law, shrouding the soul under the mantle of Jesus Christ; and there it is safe. All accusations fall off, having no where to fasten, unless some blemish could be found in that righteousness in which faith hath wrapt itself. This is the very spring of solid peace, and fills the soul with peace and joy. But still men would have something within themselves to make out the matter, as if this robe needed any such piecing; and not finding what they desire, thence disquiet and unsettlement of mind arise.

True it is, that this faith purifies the heart, and works holiness, and all graces flow from it; but in this work of justifying the sinner, it is alone, and cannot admit of any mixture. As Luther's resemblance is, "Faith is as the bride with Christ in the bed-chamber alone; but when she cometh forth, hath the attendance and train of other graces with her." This well understood, the soul that believes on Jesus Christ will not let go for all deficiency in itself; and yet, so resting on him, will not be slothful nor regardless of any duty of holiness Yea, this is the way to abound in all the fruits of the Spirit, first to have that *wisdom* from him, rightly to apprehend and

apply him as our *righteousness*, and then shall we find all furniture of grace in him; he will likewise be *sanctification*. Say not, Unless I find some measure of *sanctification*, what right have I to apply him as my *righteousness?* This inverts the order, and disappoints thee of both. Thou must first, without finding, yea, or seeking any thing in thyself but misery and guiltiness, lay hold on him as thy *righteousness;* or else thou shalt never find *sanctification* by any other endeavour or pursuit.

He it is that is *made sanctification to us*, and out of him we seek it in vain. Now, first he must be *thy righteousness*, before thou find him *thy sanctification*. Simply, as a guilty sinner, thou must flee to him for shelter; and then, being come in, thou shalt be furnished out of his fulness, with *grace for grace*. As a poor man pursued by the justiciary, fleeing to a strong castle for safety, and being in it, finds it a rich palace, and all his wants supplied there.

This misunderstanding of that method, is the cause of that darkness and discomfort, and withal of that deadness and defect of graces, that many persons go drooping under, who will not take this way, the only straight and sure way of life and comfort. Now,

Sanctification he is to us, not only as a perfect pattern, but as a powerful principle. It is really the Spirit of Christ in a believer, that crucifies the world, and purges out sin, and forms the soul to his likeness. It is impossible to be holy, not being in him; and being truly in him, it is as impossible not to be holy. Our pothering and turmoiling without him, makes us lose our labour; and in this point indeed, *little wit makes much labour.*

Redemption. Sin is often prevailing even in believers, and therewithal discomforts and doubts arising, as it cannot otherwise choose. Oh, how do they groan and sigh as captives still to the law of sin and death! Well, there is in our Lord Jesus help for that too. He is *redemption;* that is the complement and fulness of deliverance. The price he paid once for all:

now he goes on to work that deliverance by conquest, which he bought by ransom. It is going on even when we feel it not, and within a little while, it shall be perfected, and we shall see all the host of our enemies who pursued us, as Israel saw the Egyptians, lie dead upon the shore. Courage! that day is coming.

And all this is, *That he that glories, may glory in the Lord.* Is it not reasonable? No self-glorying: the more faith the less will there be still of that. A believer is nothing in himself: all is Christ's, Christ is his all. That treasurer who, being called to an account, because that out of nothing he had enriched himself suddenly, many thought he would have been puzzled with it; but he, without being much moved, next morning came before the king in an old suit that he wore before he got that office, and said, "Sir, this suit on my back is mine, but all the rest is thine." So, our old suit is ours, all the rest Christ's, and he allows it well. And in the full and pure glory that ascends to God in this work, are we to rejoice more than in the work itself as our salvation. There is an humble kind of boasting that becomes a Christian. *My soul shall glory* (or *make her boast*) *in God,* says David, *all the day long.* What was I before I met with Christ, thinks a believer, and now what am I? And, upon that thought, he wonders and loves. But most of the wonder is yet to come; for he conceives but little *what we shall be.*

SERMON XXIV.

JEREMIAH x. 23, 24.

O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh, to direct his steps.

O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in Thine anger, lest Thou bring me to nothing.

IT cannot be expressed, what an advantage a heart acquainted with God hath, in all the revolutions and changes of the world, when it turns unto Him, and gives vent to its griefs and desires into His bosom, and so finds ease. This the Prophet does here: after the denouncing of a heavy judgment, he turns towards him from whom he brought that message, to entreat for them to whom he brought it. After a very sad close of his sermon, he adds this short but very sweet prayer: presents himself, and speaks in that style, as representing the whole people; *Correct me, O Lord:* he makes their calamity, as it were, all his own; bears their person, and presents his petition for them in his own name. The prophets, though they could not but applaud and approve the justice of God who sent them, in the harshest news they brought, yet, withal could not be insensible of the miseries of His people; and so we find them mixing pathetical complaints and prayers for them, with the predictions of judgments against them.

Observe. And thus are all His faithful ministers affected towards His Church. The Lord himself is pleased to express a kind of regret, sometimes, in the punishing of them; as the tender-hearted father feels the lashes he lays on, though highly deserved by the stubbornness of His children. *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I make thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings*

are kindled together. Hos. xi. 8. So it well becomes His servants to be thus affected when they deliver sad news to His people, to return praying for them; thus going, as angels, betwixt Heaven and Earth, beseeching the people to return unto God, and beseeching God to return to His people, and spare them.

The Prophet, in this prayer, first premises a *position* suiting his purpose, and then, upon that, presents his *supplication.* The *position* he lays, to make a double benefit of it in order to his *petition.* It is both a sure ground for himself to stand on, and a fit argument to move God by. Thus it is, and thus he intends and uses it, at once to support his own faith, and to work on the goodness of God by it. Besides the fitness of the truth itself for both these ends, we find some print of both in the very way of expressing it: *O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself;* so expressing both his own persuasion of the truth of it, *I know,* and representing it to God as a fit truth to urge his suit by, *O Lord, I know.*

Observe. A great part of the strength and art of prayer lies in this: first, to have the mind furnished with fit conceptions of God, and established in the firm persuasions of them; in that is much of the strength of prayer: then, fitly to call up and use these conceptions and persuasions for our own supporting and prevailing with God; in that lies the art of it.

We possibly think that we do sufficiently believe both the goodness and power of God, especially His power, none suspecting himself of the least doubt of it; yet our perplexing doubts and fears, our feeble staggerings in faith and prayer, upon particular pressing difficulties, discover evidently a defect here, though still we will not own it. And alas! how little faculty have we in the most needful times, to rest on His strength, and to stir up ourselves to stir Him up by prayer, to do for us, holding firm to that great point of His absolute sovereignty and power over all things, and holding it up to Him, entreating Him by it to appear and work for us. Lord, it is in Thy hand; that I know, and that is enoug to me:

Thy good-will I dare trust. (For there is implied a secret confidence of that.) This contents me, that Thou hast full power of the business. That is the thing which here the Prophet fixes on. *O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself. q. d.* As there is in us no power to turn off the judgment determined, all our wit and strength can do nothing to that, so we are sure there is no power in our enemies to do any thing either beyond or beside thy appointment, in the execution of it. And upon this, Lord, we come to supplicate thee for mitigation. With men it often falls out, either in just punishments, or unjust oppressions, that the ministers and under-officers do exceed their commission, and overdo their business; yea, sometimes add little less of their own, than all that comes to which is appointed to them. But with thee, O Lord, it is not so. As our enemies cannot stir of themselves without order from Thee, and as thy commissions are always all just, so Thou seest to the performance, art present at it, which often men cannot be; and so nothing is, or can be, done beside Thy notice and allowance.

I. His position is this, *The way of man is not in himself,* and repeated more plainly, *It is not in man that walketh, to direct his steps;* thus, by a double negation, putting it altogether out of his power. And under this, the positive truth is couched, that *the absolute disposal of all the ways of men is wholly in the supreme hand of God;* according to that, Prov. xx. 24, *Man's goings are of the Lord; how can a man, then, understand his own way?* He doth not certainly know any thing of his own doings. Even he who seems to know most, to advise and deliberate upon all he does, yet hath no power of his contrivements, knows not which way they will turn, till the event doth clear it; and even then, on looking back, is often amazed at the strange course of things, so far different from, and possibly contrary to, all his witty projectings and models. He often does not attain *his own,* but he never fails to accomplish God's purpose even when his intentions are least for it, yea, when they are most against it. *Let*

us build a tower, said they, *lest we be scattered abroad*, Gen. xi.; and that was the very thing which caused their scattering. Joseph was sold by his brethren, that they might not *bow before him*, as he had dreamed; and this brought it to pass. Pharaoh says, *Let us deal wisely;* and that way of oppressing them, lest they should go away, both stirred up God to deliver them, and disposed them to depart. And not to multiply instances, generally in all the ways of men, they have their designs at most times eccentric to God's, but His design holds always, and theirs no further than they are His. Have we not ourselves seen instances of this?

Man consults and determines freely, yet even those inward actings of the mind and will are ordered and framed by the hand of God; and it cannot otherwise be. It is a most vain fancy, to imagine that any thing in this is inconsistent with the natural liberty of the will, or that any such liberty can be in any creature, as consists not with His. But because, in these inward actings, man finds himself more at his choice, though all is secretly overruled, and in the event of things, God's sovereign disposal is more legible; therefore, these two are expressed with some kind of difference, Prov. xvi. 9: *A man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directs his steps.* That is, when he hath devised, that does not carry it: he may devise and fancy things twenty ways, and think he is taking freely his own course, but he shall find in the issue another Hand than his own. *It is not in man that walks*, as the word is here: *he walketh*, and yet the direction of his steps is in another Hand. But in the devisings too, the Lord so acts upon man, that he is turned which way it pleaseth him. Even the heart, and that of the most uncontrolled, the most impetuous torrent, *the king's heart, is in His hand, as the rivers of waters: He turneth it whithersoever He will*, Proverbs xxi. 1. When men either determine themselves, or follow unallowed ways for determination, (as those, Ezek. xxi. 21,) yet are they ordered of God. This He does infallibly and uncontrollably, yet in such a way as there is nothing distorted or violented.

Fortiter et suaviter—all is so done. Things are in their own course, and men are in their voluntary choices; yet all subserving the great Lord, and his ends, and his glory, who made them all for himself: as the lower orbs have each their motion, but are all wheeled about with the first. Men know not what He is doing by them, and what in the end he will do with them. With *the rod of Assyria* he scourges his children, and then throws the rod in the fire, Isa. x. 5 and 16. The horse-leech draws the blood to fill itself, but the physician intends the patient's health. Men are drawn on by temporal prosperings and successes to drive proudly and furiously, till they drive themselves over the edge of the precipice appointed for their ruin; and all his exalting them for a season, is, in the end to exalt himself in their greater and more remarkable destruction. *I will get me a name upon Pharaoh, and all his host.* Men are busy, consulting or acting with or against one another, and he sits and laughs at their wisest plots: he alone is in all affairs, doing all His own will in heaven and in earth.

Oh! the folly and blindness of men, who think to carry all to their minds, and walk as masters of their own designs, and never have any serious thoughts of Him in whose hands both they and all their business, and all the affairs of states and kingdoms of this world, are as a piece of wax, to frame them to what he pleases—he who *destroys the counsels of the wise*, and *makes the diviners mad*, who *pours contempt upon princes, leads counsellors away spoiled, and maketh the judges fools;* he who hath set limits to all things, to the *raging of the sea*, making the small sand give check to the great ocean: when it *brake out of the womb*, he had a cradle provided for it, and swaddling bands, Job xxxviii., and there, though it rolls to and fro, yet it cannot get out. Oh! it is ignorance of God makes men rush on, and not inquire whether he be with them or no. Moses was wise and stout, and leader of a numerous people, yet he would not stir on other terms: *If Thou go not with us, let us not go up hence.* Well, if men will on their peril, be it; let us reverence God. For even

this is for Him, and He will gain His glory out of it. *The way of man is not in himself.* If we see their folly, let us learn to be wiser, to keep close to Him, and desire His gracious direction of our ways; for it is not in our hands, even when we intend best. And for public affairs, let us rest satisfied in His part. Amidst all disorders, He is ordering all wisely and justly, and to them who love Him, graciously; therefore we ought not to be dismayed. Let us calm our thoughts with this, remember who it is that rules all, and disposes of peace and war, and all affairs, and we cannot wish them in a better hand. I am persuaded, that in all the commotions of the world, when a believer thinks on this, it cannot but calm and compose his spirit exceedingly: *My Father rules all.* Let this so quiet our fears, as that withal it quicken our prayers, and stir us up to the work of this day,—repentant, humble, seeking unto God; seeing all is in His hands, our peace, our liberties, and our enemies, that threaten to bereave us of both. Oh, that the effect of all our troubles and dangers were to drive us more to God, to make us throng more about the throne of grace, to draw forth our King for our help! Oh, our impenitence and unreformedness! That turns Him to be our enemy, and that only. Men are nothing. And now, in so great straits, yet, so little calling on Him! Oh, my brethren, what are we doing? Oh! pray, pray. It is our God that commands all, and we may say it upon His own warrant, *it is prayer that commands Him.*

II. The petition: *Correct me,* &c. When the hand of God is stretched out against a people or a person, certainly there is no running from him. The only wise and safe course is, to run unto him. This the Prophet does in behalf of his people, and by his example teaches them so to do. As the Prophet utters his own sense and desires in this prayer, so he sets it as a copy to the people of God in time of judgment to pray by; shews them the way, which is, not vainly to offer to flee from Him, or proudly to stand out against Him, to

their undoing, but to humble themselves under His mighty hand, supplicating Him, yielding themselves, and begging quarter. *Correct me, O Lord, with judgment, not in anger, lest Thou bring me to nothing.* That I should suffer for my rebellion, there is good reason; yet, Lord, do not utterly destroy me, which will be, if the weight of Thine anger fall upon me. And for that, though indeed we have deserved it, yet there is another vent for it, and pardon us to say so, fitter matter for it: *Pour out Thy wrath upon the Heathen:* ver. 25: let it go out that way.—So we see the supplication hath these two particulars in it, an *aversion*, and a *diversion;* an *aversion* of the anger of God from His own people under correction, and a *diversion* of it upon His and their enemies; Lord, turn from us, and pour it out there. The *aversion* is presented, qualified with a humble submission, declaring expressly they decline not that correction of God, but only deprecate his consuming anger. *Correct me, O Lord, but with judgment,* that is, with measure; such as the discretion and love of a father resolves on towards his child, Thus much will I correct him for his good, and no further.

Not in Thine anger.] God is pleased to express His displeasure against sin, by wrath and anger, even towards His own children. But the anger which here the Prophet entreats exception from, for the Church, is anger opposed to judgment, unbounded, destroying anger, that knows no limits nor stop, but the devouring of those against whom it is kindled. This is spoken in our language, but it is to be understood in a way suiting the purity of God. In Him truly is no passion at all, much less any that is not ordered by wisdom and judgment. He is not carried in heat beyond His purposed measure, but knows well how far He intends to go with any, and goes no farther. But as His anger means His just punishing of sin, so His unlimited anger signifies no other than His just proceeding in punishment, to the utter destruction of inflexible sinners; and to this is opposed here, His *correcting*

with judgment, that is, in a fatherly, gracious moderation, such as does not utterly ruin and cut off, but indeed reclaims and converts sinners unto him.

This submission and yieldance to a measured correction is a thing most reasonable: they that know anything aright of themselves and God, will not refuse it.

First, reflecting on their own sinfulness, which, when truly discovered, even where there is least, yet is there enough of it to justify even utter destruction. Therefore have we good reason unrepiningly to receive such moderate correction from the hand of God as he thinks fit, and to wonder that it is no more. It is one true character of repentance under the rod, to *accept the punishment of our iniquity*, to have our untamed spirits brought low, to stoop to God, to acknowledge our punishment to be far less than our iniquity, and that it is of his goodness *that we are not consumed*, as the Church confesses, Lam. iii. 22. Though we feel it heavy, and the measure hard, yet self-knowledge and conscience of sin will lay the soul low, and make it quiet, so that it will say nothing, or if anything, it will be confession of its own guiltiness and the righteousness of God; still clearing him in all, as it is, Psal. li. 4, and using that other, Psal. cxix. 137; whatsoever is so inflicted, *Righteous art Thou, O Lord, and just are Thy judgments*. Which words a good king used, being put in prison, and hardly dealt with. So the Psalmist, Psal. xxxviii. 3: *There is no soundness in my flesh, because of Thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones, because of my sin*. He justifies God's anger by his own sin. Thus Daniel makes confession for this people, under the very captivity here threatened, when it had lasted out the full term. See Dan. ix.

And knowing our sin, ought we not to allow God the clearing of his own justice, his purity, and hatred of sin, in punishing it? And, possibly, he will punish sin most exemplarily here, in those who are nearest him, his own people and children; he can least endure it there. This, especially, when we con-

sider his sovereignty and greatness, that he is tied to no account of his actings; and though we did not see so clear reason for our sufferings in our deservings, there is reason enough in his will. And this, well considered, would bring us to much humble submission in all. *I was dumb*, says David, *I opened not my mouth, because Thou didst it.* Psal. xxxix. 9. The bishop of Troyes meeting Attila marching towards the city, asked who he was. *I am*, said he, *the scourge of God.* Upon this, he set open the gates to him; but God marvellously restrained the soldiers in that city.

But yet further, as our own guiltiness, and God's righteousness and greatness plead for this compliance with His chastisements, so even his goodness, and our own profit in them. There is in his chastising of his own people very much mercy, that they *may not be condemned with the world.* 1 Cor. xi. 32. Their afflictions have a secret stamp of love on them; *By this is the iniquity of Jacob purged*, &c. He purifies a people in His furnace, that they may be holy unto Him; gives his own many sweet experiences of secret support and comfort in affliction, and seasonable delivery out of it, and brings them forth with advantage. *The peaceable fruits of righteousness.* Heb. xii. 11. He humbles and purges a people, or a person, by his rods, and prepares them for greater mercies, to enjoy them both more sweetly and usefully; renews his covenant and the mutual endearments of love betwixt himself and his people, according to the gracious promises made to his people, in relation to this very judgment here threatened, and after inflicted on them. See Isa. liv.; Ezek. xxxvi.

We, possibly, think it strange that our pressures and troubles still continue, and rather grow upon us than abate; but we judge not wisely concerning this, the most part cursing and repining, others falling into a dead, hopeless stupidness, not caring what becomes of things. But our best course were, to turn to Him who smites us, to acknowledge our rebellions and His justice, to eye men less and God more, in our suffer-

ings, and to confess that our provocations exceed all that is come upon us; to fall down humbly before God, and take submissively His chastisements, saying, *Correct me, O Lord, but with judgment;* and with the Church, *I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him.* Mic. vii. 9.

Thus, likewise, in private personal correctings, let us learn to behave ourselves meekly and humbly, as the children of so great and good a Father; whatsoever He inflicts, not to murmur, nor entertain a fretful thought of it. Besides the undutifulness and unseemliness of it, how vain is it! What gain we by struggling and casting up our hand to cast off the rod, but the more lashes? Our only way is, to kneel and fold under His hands, and kiss His rod, and, even while He is smiting us, to be blessing Him, sending up confessions of His righteousness, and goodness, and faithfulness, only entreating for the turning away of His wrath, though it should be with the continuing of our affliction. That is here the style of the Prophet's prayer, *Correct me, O Lord, but not in anger.* And, according to this suit, even where troubles are chastisements for sin, yet a child of God may find much sweetness, reading much of God's love in so dealing with him, in not suffering him to grow wanton and forget Him, as in much ease even His own children sometimes do. And as they may find much of God's love to them in sharp corrections, they may raise and act much of their love to Him in often-repeated resignments and submissions of themselves, and ready consenting to, yea, rejoicing in His good pleasure, even in those things which to their flesh and sense are most unpleasant.

Now, to the *petition*, the averting of His anger. That is the great request of them who know and fear Him; and there is high reason for it. The heaviest sufferings are light without it, but the least ingredient of that adds inexpressible weight to the smallest affliction. This was the thing, it is likely, which made the visage of death so sad to holy men in Scripture, David, Hezekiah, &c., that in those times it had

some character of God's anger against them upon it; came to them as a messenger of displeasure. So a thing, small in itself, may be a great curse. To be cast out unburied is no great matter. Natural men slight it: *Cœlo tegitur qui non habet urnam.* There is little difference, to lie eaten of beasts above ground, or of worms beneath. Yet, when foretold to a man as a judgment denounced from God, as against that king, Jer. xxii. 19, it hath its own weight; carrying some stamp of God's despising him. And though a man feels it not when it is done, yet he feels it, looking on it beforehand, especially as threatened of God; sees himself, as it were, dragged about and torn.

Now, if any little particular cross, marked with God's present anger, becomes so heavy, how much more is His abiding, prolonged wrath, the thing here spoken of—*anger*, to which no bound is set! That, says he, in the name of his people, *would bring me to nought.* There is no standing before it; it will make the stoutest and proudest to shake, yea, shakes them to pieces. If the *wrath of a king* be to meaner men *as the roaring of a lion,* (Prov. xix. 12,) how much more terrible, even to kings themselves, is the wrath of God! This great King, whose voice shakes the mountains, and makes the earth to tremble, armies of terrors and deaths are nothing to a look of His angry countenance. *If He withdraws not His anger, the proud helpers stoop under Him.* Job ix. 13. The helpers of pride, the great Atlases of the world, who are thought to bear up all, those who, for their wit and power, are thought the supporters of the kingdoms, how soon are they crushed to pieces by a touch of this anger of God, and *perish at the rebuke of His countenance! O Lord,* says that holy man, Psal. xc. 11, considering the frailty of poor man, and the power of God, *who knows the power of Thine anger? Even according to Thy fear, so is Thy wrath;* full as much, yea, far more terrible than we can apprehend it.

They who dare go on in ways wherein it may be but suspected that He is against them, Oh! they know Him not.

Let us consider, and fear before Him ; and, for the land, still entreat the turning away of His wrath, rather than deliverances from any pressures: Lord, while Thou thinkest good further to afflict us, so as to draw us nearer to Thee, we are content, yea, we will bless Thee; but whatsoever Thou do with us, suffer not Thy hot displeasure to arise against us, for then we are undone. So this is all a soul under His hand, in affliction, ought to say, *Correct me, but not in wrath, lest Thou bring me to nothing:* Thou knowest I cannot stand before that. He is pleased to look to this, and to express it as that which moderates His anger, even when justly incensed; Isa. lvii. 16, *I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth; for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made.* Lord, if Thou wilt, how quickly and how easily couldst Thou break into pieces, or sink into nothing, not only me, a little atom of it, but the entire frame of this whole world; and, therefore, strive not with me. This Job often represents, and God is pleased to move Himself to restrain His wrath, and draw forth His mercy by it. His great compassion lays hold on such considerations. See Psal. lxxviii. 38, 39, and Psal. ciii. 14. And this may furnish great confidence to souls under a sense of wrath, that do but fall down and entreat for mercy. He who so often prevents us, when we seek it not, will He cast any one away who seeks and sues for it?

The *diversion* of this anger, briefly relates to the heathen, the professed and obdurate enemies of God and His Church: *q. d.* Thy wrath, O Lord, may have its course, and yet, spare Thy people. There is matter enough for it round about, that is good for nothing else; and good reason for it, besides all other wickedness, their spite and cruelty against Thy people: *For they have eaten up Jacob.*

Note the character of the ungodly, who are fit fuel for this fire, *That know not, and call not on Thy name;* that profess not, pretend not to be Thine. Tremble, you who are too like these, though reputed amongst the people of God. Seek

the knowledge of God, and worship Him, families and persons, lest this curse come upon you.

Now, this is a prophetical foretelling of the utter destruction of the Church's enemies, whereas the Church is *corrected in measure,* and not destroyed. She is first punished; but they that come last, the enemies, the heaviest wrath falls down there, and smothers them, ends on them, and makes *a full end* of them. Jer. xxx. 11. The belief of this may uphold the faithful in the Church's greatest distresses. When at the lowest, then the wrath is nearest changing place and removing to her enemies.

And this is to be so desired and prayed for, in reference to the implacable enemies of God, that we beware we mix nothing of our own interest or passion with it. As wrath in God is without any disturbance, *æstuas et tranquillus es,* so somewhat like is the desire of it in the godly, a calm, undistempered love of the name of God. And so shall the saints rejoice in the final victory and triumph of Christ over all his enemies, and their final ruin in that day when they shall be made his footstool. Then they shall have a pure complacency and delight in his justice; that shall make all even. And why are we disquieted, if we hope for that day?

SERMON XXV.

Isaiah xxx. 15—19.

For thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, In returning and rest shall ye be saved, in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength; and ye would not.

But ye said, No, for we will flee upon horses, therefore shall ye flee: And we will ride upon the swift, therefore shall they that pursue you be swift.

One thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one: at the rebuke of five shall ye flee, till ye be left as a beacon upon the top of a mountain, and as an ensign on a hill.

And therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the Lord is a God of judgment; blessed are all they that wait for him.

In the sentence of that greatest and biggest judgment that ever yet came on the world, the universal deluge, as we have it, Gen. vi., that word doth most lively express the reason of it, *My Spirit shall not always strive with man.* For thus it is, while he spares even his own people, he is at a continual strife with them by gracious entreaties and mercies, by advices, and warnings, and threatenings, still contesting; that is the way he uses in the contest, on his part, against refusals, and revolts, and rebellions on their part. Thus here.

The question betwixt Him and his people here, is about the help of Egypt: this God often declares to be wholly against his mind and their own good; yet they on all occasions had so strong a mind to it that they could not be diverted. The Prophet here hath his message concerning this point, to preach it, and to write it, to remain *ad perpetuam rei memo-*

riam, as they speak, *that it may be for the time to come, for ever and ever;* ver. 8: shews them plainly, that this course was wholly without the counsel and consent of God, yea, directly against it, and that it should succeed accordingly: *The strength of Pharaoh shall be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion;* it shall prove to you according to its name, *a land of distress and trouble,* instead of help. And if you would know what would suit that other name of Egypt better, that were humble yieldance to God, and confidence in him: your *Rahab,* your best *Egypt,* your truest *strength* were, *to sit still.* Ver. 7. This is here again represented to them, so gladly would he reclaim them.

For thus saith the Lord.] The words have, 1st, God's express *advice* to his people. 2dly, Their peremptory *refusal* of it. 3dly, His just *sentence* passed upon their obstinacy. The *advice* is prefaced with the usual words of the prophets, *Thus saith the Lord;* for in that lies the dignity and authority of the message. His advices, doubtless, are the choicest and the safest; yea, His counsels are all commands, requiring duly the most absolute obedience.

The Lord Jehovah.] Were but His word known to be *His,* and taken so, how would our souls melt, and yield to the impressions of it, when we read or hear! Oh! learn to hear him, to take every word of His as from his own mouth, every time the law is read, as if thou heard it from Mount Sinai. So think, Now God commands me to fear him, as if you heard Him speaking from heaven. That would level more our opinion of men, and make less difference of His messengers.

Another word of His style is here added, *The Holy One of Israel.* This is much to be considered by his people, the holiness of his nature, and withal, the nearness of his relation to them, and so, the reverence and obedience we owe him, our deep engagement to holiness, as his people, his children. This is his image in us, if we are truly such. All his sons and daughters are like Him, *holy as He is holy.*

The blind, base world thinks it a word of disgrace, but the great God owns it as a chief point of his glory, a diamond of His crown, and frequently expresses it as one of the titles He most delights to be known by, *Holy, Holy, Holy.* And as this is beheld, the heart cannot but be filled with reverence, and holy fear, and self-abasement; as this Prophet here, in seeing the vision, and hearing that voice, *Then said I, Wo is me, for I am undone.* Isa. vi. 5.

This is here used fitly, to scare His people from rebellion, the unholy way on which they were so bent; and the rather because they were grown weary of it, and desired not to hear this word. Ver. 9. Therefore it is the more repeated; *Because ye despise this word,* ye shall hear it the more. Ver. 12. The Prophet will neither be mocked nor threatened out of it; he will both deliver his message, and give the King who sent him His own title. And Oh, that we knew Him according to it, and understood what this means, *The holy One of Israel!* He was a holy man, and knew something, who yet confesses his own ignorance in that point: (there must be some knowledge of it, to discover ignorance of it:) *I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the Holy.* Prov. xxx. 3.

In returning and rest.] In leaving off the pains ye take in messages and journeys to Egypt, in humbly and quietly composing yourselves to wait on Me, and trust in Me; submitting to My hand, in what I bring upon you, and from the same hand, Mine alone, expecting deliverance in due time.—This does not bar the use of all lawful means, but, as it shuts out perplexing cares and turmoil even in those good means, so it expressly forbids all intermeddling with all unwarranted ways, such as God doth not direct us to, but rather dissuades us from.

And if this be the safest way, surely, it is the sweetest, easiest way. There cannot be any thing easier than to be quiet and sit still, to rest and trust, and so be safe and strong. And as it is in this particular, so, generally, it is in all the

ways of God; they are the only easy, peaceable, sweet ways, with the least pains, and the surest advantage. And the ways of disobedience, besides what comes after, are, even for the present, more turbulent, laborious, perplexed ways. What a hurry and pother are men put in, to serve their lusts, or their ambition, when, if they attain their object, it does not quit the cost and the pains; besides that of their hopes mock them, and after long pursuit, they embrace a shadow. Thus men woo their own vexation, and take a great deal more pains to be miserable, than they would be put to, to make them happy. What a pity to pay so dear for nothing, to give their riches and treasures, and to be at pains too, to carry them to *a people that shall not profit them* (*et oleum et operam*), both their expense and travel laid out to no purpose! The voluptuous, or covetous, or ambitious, how do they project, and drudge, and serve their wretched lusts, who, when they have done one piece of service, are still to begin another! And what is the profit of all, but shame and sorrow at last? The humble, sober-minded Christian saves all that pains, and hath his heart's desire in quietness and confidence*. His great desire and delight is, God; and, by desiring and delighting, he hath Him. Psal. xxxvii. 4. *Delight thou in the Lord, and He shall give thee thy heart's desire*—HIMSELF; and then, surely, thou shalt have all. Any other thing *commit to Him, and He shall bring it to pass.*

Strange! men might have God at an easier rate than the poorest vanities they are hunting after, and yet they will not: a full fountain of living waters is ready provided, yet they will be at pains to hew out little cisterns, which, after all their pains, are but *broken cisterns, and can hold no water.*

I know not what men are doing, still at work, when they might better sit still, troubling themselves and all about them,

* Vacat temperantia. Sed non habebunt requiem, qui bestiam adorant. SENECA.

and cannot well tell for what. Oh, the sweet peace of believing and obeying God! They truly conquer, sitting still: *Sedendo vincebant.* In all times, they are safe under the shadow of the Almighty; are *strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.*

And ye would not, but said, No.] Thus men sometimes flatly reject His counsels, and, when they are not so gross as plainly to speak it out, yet say so in doing so, and for good manner's sake will blanch it with reproaching the messengers; will have it to be not God's mind, but men's own fancy, a false vision; will own nothing for truth but what suits their humour and design. First, they resolve on their course without acquainting God, ask not His advice; then, when He is pleased to give it by His messengers, they reject it, not under that name, as God's advice, but will not have it pass for this, because it crosses their already-determined course. If it favoured that, then, no question, it were welcome enough as His word. That is meant by those words, ver. 10. *Which say to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things; speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits.* And so they used Jeremiah long after, in this very point. Jer. xlii. 2. And so they go on to take their own course. *No, but we will flee upon horses.*

And this is the nature of carnal hearts; they are generally inclined to rebel, and take a way of their own, casting away the counsels of God, as not suiting with the State, or with wit, or points of honour. They find more feeling and real substance in sensual things than in the promises of God: these seem airy, unsure things to them; therefore, they would still see apparent means, and where these fail, think it but a fancy to rest on God. They dare not trust Him so but as withal to do for themselves, although nothing can be done but what He forbids, which therefore cannot be done without giving up with Him, and departing from their trust on Him. All this cleaves to us, and much cause have we to suspect ourselves, when it is

but doubtful that there appears little or no evidence of God's counsel or good-will to a business, but rather clear characters of His dislike, and much of our own will, a stout, uncontrollable bent to it when we are conscious to ourselves of this, that either we have not asked advice of God at all, or very slightly, not being much upon our knees with it; or, possibly, in asking His advice, have brought our answer with us, in our own breasts, the lying oracle that making answer, and we consenting to delude ourselves, not hearkening to any thing that does not clink and sound to our purpose.

Our hearts are exceedingly deceitful, and particularly in this point of withdrawing our trust from God, and leaving off to follow Him, in His ways, to trust on the arm of flesh, on policy and strength, and self-resolved undertakings, rather than on Him without these. Evil men think that those who advise them to trust on God are silly fellows, who know not what belongs to policy and reasons of state. A fancied wisdom it is, that men are enamoured with, and look not to a higher wisdom, consider not God, that *He also is wise.* Isa. xxxi. 2. There is, I think, in that word a tart scorn of the folly of their seeming wisdom. Be it that you are wits, yet you will not deny some wisdom to God: *Yet He also is wise.* So they think not on His power neither; therefore He puts them in mind, (ver. 3,) that *the Egyptians are men.*

Well, if you be resolved on that course, says God, then, know mine too, that I am resolved upon: *Therefore ye shall flee,* shall have fleeing enough: and, if you be *swift, they that pursue you shall be swifter,* and *one* shall serve to *chase a thousand, the rebuke,* the very terror of one. This is the condition of the mightiest people and the best appointed armies, when forsaken of God. There is no strength nor courage, nor anything of worth in any of the creatures, but as it is derived from God: it is dependent on Him in the continuance and use of it. *Why are thy valiant men swept away? They stood not, because the Lord did drive them.* Jer. xlvi. 15.

We have seen this, and the turn of it on both sides, how men become a prey to any party, when the terror from God is upon them.

Therefore, learn we to fear Him, to beware of all ways wherein we may justly apprehend Him to be against us. Cleave to Him and to His truth, when it is lowest, and when no human means of help appear, then think you hear Him saying to you, *Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.*

Ver. 18. *Therefore will the Lord wait.*] There is no language of men nor of angels, fit to express the graciousness of God's punishments and the threatenings of them; as if they were violently drawn and forced from Him, but mercy, and the sweet promises thereof, naturally flowing from Him. Thus here, He is forced to give up His people to their own counsels, because they will not follow His advices. He entreats them but to be quiet, and let Him do for them; but seeing they will not *sit still*, and be safe at His direction, they must run their own course, and fall in it. But it cannot pass so, they must not be quite given over; the Lord hath an interest in them which He will not lose. They must, indeed, for a time eat the fruit of their own ways, and that is not a season to shew them favour; but the Lord will wait a better hope. He is resolved to shew them mercy, and will find His own time for it: *Therefore will* He *wait, that He may be gracious.*

And this is He moved to, according to His gracious nature, by the greatness of their distress and desolation. Though procured by themselves, by their great, their inflexible stubbornness, yet He pities to see them so *left as a beacon on the top of a mountain, and as an ensign on a hill. And therefore will the Lord wait.* Thus we have the proper arguings of free mercy, which otherwise, to our narrow thoughts, may seem strange and somewhat inconsequent. Such a *Therefore* as this, so unexpectedly changing the strain, doth genuinely and sweetly follow upon the premises, when free love is the medium: that intervening in the midst, makes the sweet turn. Your iniquities prevail to bring you low, and lengthen out your

calamities; *therefore*, I will let that have its course, and will stay till my fit time come to do you good. Meanwhile I will lie hid, and be as sitting still; but when that time comes, I will get up and shew myself. *He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you; for the Lord is a God of judgment.* He is wise, and just, and good, and knows His measures of afflicting His people, His times and ways of delivering them, and of bringing destruction on His enemies, and will not slip this season; and it being so, this certainly follows, that they are *blessed that wait on Him.*

Observe, 1. The strong inclination of God to shew mercy. He would willingly have His people to find nothing but ease; He delights in the prosperity of His servants, would have them constantly have a sweet, peaceful, yea, cheerful life, by constant walking in His ways; but they are often the enemies of their own peace, grieve His Spirit, and turn Him to be their own enemy. But He cannot persist in that to His own; He longs to be at His way of mercy and loving kindness again. *He retains not His anger for ever*, because mercy pleases Him. He inflicts judgment for sin, but what He delights in is mercy. Therefore says the prophet, Lam. iii. 32, 33, *Though He cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies: For He doth not willingly afflict, nor grieve the children of men.* Though He doth *grieve them*, yet *not willingly:* they themselves procure and draw on that, by *grieving His Spirit.* But He willingly shews mercy, for that abounds: there is such multitude and plenty of it, that, as to full breasts, it is a pleasure to Him to let it forth. The two words, *gracious* and *merciful*, which stand first in the name of God, Exod. xxxiv. 6, the one signifies *free grace*, the other, *tender bowels of mercy.* This is no emboldment to continue in sin, yea, it is of all things the most fit encouragement and inducement to a sinner to return from his sin; and so it is used and urged throughout the Scriptures. See Isa. xxxi. 5, 6, and lv. 7; Jer. iii. 12. In public calamities, where a people are charging the cause thereof upon them-

selves, searching their hearts and their ways, and turning unto God, humbly acknowledging their iniquity, and entreating pardon. Oh! this is the thing He would not despise. Yea, it is what He looks and longs for, and upon that would readily forget all past disloyalties. See Jer. iii. 1. Yea, at the sound of their repentings, His bowels would resound with compassion by a secret sympathy and harmony, as one string well tuned to another, stirs when it is touched. Thus Jer. xxxi. 18—20.

This a sinner shall find in His returning unto God, more than we can express or promise in His name. Oh, *He waits to be gracious,* meets thee graciously. Yea, He hath first touched thy heart secretly, hath first drawn it towards Himself, before it stirred, or had a thought that way. Now, no more upbraidings or remembrance of all thy wanderings: an act of perfect oblivion is past. *For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.* Jer. xxxi. 34. Is thy heart any little softened, and relents it towards Him? Then, the controversy is ended, and His thoughts are now how to comfort thee. Art thou busy indicting accusations against thyself? Then makes He it His part to wipe away and blot out. Comest thou home with a heart full of holy shame and grief, and thy mouth full of humble confessions of thy disobedience? Then know, it is thy tender-hearted Father meets thee, most ready to forgive thee, yea, to interrupt thy confessions in the middle with embraces and kisses of love.

But, alas! we preclude ourselves from the sweet experiences of these tender mercies, by the hardness of our hearts, and by the lightness and vanity of them. Oh that indignity, our God still *waiting to be gracious,* to heap up more of His love to us, but we are busied in other things, and not at leisure to wait on Him! Oh! what are they, these things that take us up? Great matters? Alas! sorry trifles all day long. And when we are at leisure, yet we are not at leisure; for then we must take our ease, must go to sleep, and so still He is put off

and forced to retire, after He has stayed till *His head be filled with dew, and His locks with the drops of the night.* Cant. v. 2.

Observation 2. The Lord doth most exactly and wisely measure both the degree and the time of His people's afflictions. Though they have brought them upon themselves, and justly He might leave them so, this He will not do: He is *a God of judgment.* This is largely and sweetly expressed, in a resemblance of husbandry, Isaiah xxviii. 24—29. He knows how much and how long outward or inward trouble is fit for every one, and where the less will serve, will not use the more. He knows what need some spirits have to be bruised and broken beyond others, either under disgrace or poverty, or the proper pressures of the spirit within, apprehensions of wrath, or withdrawments, at least, of comforts: and hath set His days for deliverance of His church, and of every believer under affliction. So the style of the prophet, *In that day*, speaking as of a certain prefixed day, and that no power or wit of man can disappoint. And it is so chosen, as it shall be evident to be the fittest, that it could not so well either have been sooner or later; all things concurring to make it most seasonable to His people, and honourable to His own name. Hab. ii. 3, *The vision is for the appointed time: though it tarry, wait for it; it shall come and shall not tarry.* That is strange, *Though it tarry, it shall not tarry.* But in the original, there are two words, the one importing an undue slowness, or constrained retardment: that cannot be so, *it shall not tarry, though it tarry;* that is, though it stay itself, and come not till the *appointed time:* so the other word signifies. Thus, Psal. cii. 13, *Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion; for the set time is come.* Now for this the Lord waits. It is not through want of love, but from abundance of wisdom, that He delivers not sooner. He hath chosen the fittest time, in His all-discerning wisdom; yet there is in His love an earnest kind of longing that the time were come. Thus here, *He*

waits to be gracious, and He *will be exalted*, will cheerfully and gladly raise up Himself, and appear to shew mercy to His people, and bring his enemies low; coming forth, as it were, to judgment, and sitting down on his throne. In which posture He was not seen while they prevailed and triumphed, and His Church were under their oppression; but when the time of their restoring and consolation comes, He then is to sit on His throne, and so is exalted to shew them mercy. Hence the Psalmist so often desires that the Lord would arise, and utters predictions, assuring that He will arise, and exciting his people to rejoice in that. Psal. ix. 7, 8, and Psal. xcvi., xcvii., and xcviii.

Thus the Church, in her saddest condition, ought hopefully to remember and rest on it, that the day is determined, and cannot fail. Our salvation is in God. He laughs at His enemies, when they are at the top of prosperity and pride; sees that their day is coming. Now, certainly, the firm persuasion of this would much stay our minds; but either we do not believe, or we do not improve and use these truths, and draw that comfort from them which abounds in them. Our God loses no time: *He is waiting* till His appointed time. And if *He wait*, it becomes us so to do. That is our duty here, *to wait on Him.* This faith does, and so, makes not haste: neither goes out to any undue means, nor frets impatiently within at the deferring of deliverance, but quietly rests on God, and waits for Him. This, as it is our duty, is also our happiness; and thus it is here expressed. Upon consideration that *the Lord waits to be gracious, and will be exalted to shew mercy*, the Prophet is carried to this acclamation, in respect to the happiness of believers, *O! blessed are they that wait for Him!* Their thoughts fall in and meet with His; for He is *waiting* for the same day they *wait* for, and if he be not disappointed, they shall not. We are naturally irregular in our affections and notions, and the only right ordering of them, is, by reducing them to a conformity with the ways and thoughts of God, which keep an unalterable, fixed course, as the heavens: the

way, I say, to rectify our thoughts is, to set them by His, as clocks and watches, which so readily go wrong, too slow or too fast, are ordered by the sun, which keeps its course. Oh! that we were more careful to set and keep our hearts in attendance on God, winding them up in meditation upon Him, and conforming them in their motions and desires to His disposal in all; for all that concerns us, and for the times of all, being quiet, yea, glad in this, which the Psalmist makes his joy, *My times are in Thy hand, O Lord.* Psal. xxxi. 15. And surely, that is the best. Were I to choose, they should be in no other hands, neither mine own, nor any others. Alas! what silly, poor creatures are we! How little do we know what is fit for us in any kind, and still less what time is fit for any mercy to be bestowed upon us! When He withholds mercies or comforts for a season, it is but till the due season; it is but to ripen them for us, which we in childish haste would pluck green, when they would be neither so sweet nor so wholesome. Therefore it is our wisdom and our peace, to resign all things into His hands, to have no will nor desires, but only this, that we may still *wait for Him.* All shall be well enough, if we but get rid of the vain hopes and expectations of this world. None who indulge them are so well but they are still waiting for somewhat further. Now, amidst all that, our soul may say with David, and speak it to God as known to Him, that it is so indeed: *And now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in Thee.* My *expectation*, or *waiting*, (the same word that is here,) *is all placed upon Thee.* Is it so, brethren? Are our hearts gathered in from other things, to this attendance, while the most about us are gaping for the wind? Have we laid all up in God, to desire and *wait for Him*, and pretend to know nothing beside Him?

I would do so, may a soul think, but can I hope that He will look on me, and bestow Himself on such a one as I am? To that I say nothing but look on His word. If thou thinkest that warrant good enough, here it is for thee, that they are certainly *blessed that wait for Him.* This is assurance enough. Never was

any one who *waited for Him*, miserable with disappointment. Whosoever thou art that dost indeed desire Him, and desirest to *wait for Him*, surely thou resolvest to do it in His ways, wherein He is to be found, and wilt not willingly depart from these ; that were foolishly to disappoint thyself, and not to be true to thy own end. Therefore look to that; do not keep company with any sin. It may surprise thee sometimes as an enemy, but let it not lodge with thee as a friend.

And mind this other thing, prescribe nothing to God. If thou hast begun to wait, faint not, give not up, wait on still. It were good reason, were it but upon little hope at length to find Him ; but since it is upon the unfailing assurance, that in the end thou shalt obtain, what folly were it to lose all for want of waiting a little longer! See Psalm xl. 1. *In waiting, I waited—waited, and better waited*—but all was overpaid: He did hear me. So Psalm cxxx., *I wait and wait until the morning.* These two joined are all, and may well go together, *earnest desire*, and *patient attendance.*

These words, as others of the prophet, which we call *consolations*, I conceive, look beyond the deliverances from outward troubles, to the great promise of the *Messiah.* Sure I am, the strain of something following is too high for that, and cannot but have an aspect to the days of the Gospel, as that verse 26. Now, the Lord *had* set His time, that *fulness of time* for the coming of the blessed Son in the flesh ; and till that time *came*, the Lord was *waiting to be gracious*, to open up His treasures more fully than ever before ; which when He did, then *was He exalted to shew mercy*, and exalted in shewing mercy. Christ himself was lifted up on the cross, there to shew that rich mercy that is for ever to be admired ; lifted up to shew his bowels, as the word is here. Did he not let us see into his heart, there to read that love that can no otherwise be uttered? And in that the Lord was most eminently manifested a *God of judgment*, wisdom, and justice, and mercy, all shining brightest in that contrivance. There he was lift up, and then after that lift up into glory, who is the *Desire of the*

nations, the salvation and joy of all ages, both before and after. Before he came, they were from one age to another *waiting;* and more particularly at the time of his coming, God stirred up the expectation of believers to welcome him, being so near. See Luke ii. 25, 38. And in all times, before and after that, he is the happiness of souls, and *they* only *are blessed that wait for Him.* Whether you do or do not believe it now, the day is coming when all the world shall know it to be so.

SERMON XXVI.

JEREMIAH xiv. 7, 8, 9.

O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do Thou it for Thy name's sake: for our backslidings are many, we have sinned against Thee.

O the Hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldest Thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a way-faring man, that turneth aside to tarry for a night?

Why shouldest Thou be as a man astonished, as a mighty man that cannot save? yet Thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by Thy name, leave us not.

IF we look backwards and forwards in this chapter, we find the three great executioners of God's anger on the world foretold, as having received commission against this people.

In all troubles, felt or feared, this is still the great resource of them who are acquainted with it, and can use it, Prayer. And their labour in it is not altogether lost, even where judgment is determined and unalterable, as here it was; for some mitigations of time and measure are desirable, and by prayer attainable; and whatsoever there is of that kind, the prayers that have been made long before, have had a concurrence and influence in it. And always, at the least, Prayer carries the personal good of them that present it; if it return unto

their bosom, as David speaks, without effect for others, it returns not thither empty, it brings peace and safety thither with it; they save their own souls. The mourners, if they turn not away the destroyers' weapons from the city, yet they procure one sent along with them, with an inkhorn for their own marking and sparing, Ezek. ix. 3. And were there nothing in this, nor any following effect, Prayer hath within itself its own reward. Did we know it, we should think so. The very dignity and delight of so near access to God, to speak with Him so freely, this in itself is the most blessed and honourable privilege that the creature is capable of; it is a pledge of heaven, something of it beforehand, a standing in pretension to the life of angels: *Angelorum candidati*, as Tertullian speaks: it is to be but *a little lower*, as the word is, Psal. viii. 5. Many practise a form; few know the vital sweetness of it.

Oh, my brethren, be aspiring to more heavenliness, and a higher bent of the soul in it than as yet you know, and use it more that way; use it for yourselves and others, this whole land, these kingdoms, the Church of God through the whole earth. No times that we have seen, wherein it hath been more needful, and none wherein less plentiful. There is no one that *stirs up himself to lay hold on God*. Some, no doubt, there are in these times; yet, so few, so general a decay and negligence in the zeal and frequency of prayer, that, to speak of, there is none. And is it not so now with us? Many discourse one to another, and yet, most to little or no purpose: but little is spoken where nothing would be lost, in humble supplication to God. And this is the saddest sign of that long lasting trouble. Oh! pity the kingdom and yourselves, and learn to pray.

This prayer of the Prophet is made up of the two usual ingredients, *confession* and *petition*.

O Lord, Jehovah.] A chief point of prayer is, the presenting of the soul before God, remembering to whom we speak, that it is to the great King, the holy God; which this expresses, where it is indeed, when we say, O Lord, or should

remind us of it, when we forget it, to have such apprehensions as we can reach of His glorious majesty. Consider, if we find our hearts filled with Him when we are before Him. Oh! how seldom think we that He is God, even while we speak to Him, and how quickly do we forget it, and let slip that thought! When we have any thing of it, how soon are we out of it, and multiplying vain words! For such are all those we utter to Him without this. Oh! pray to be taught this point of prayer, and watch over your hearts in prayer, to set them thus when you enter to Him, and to call them in when they wander, and pluck them up when they slumber, to think where they are, and what they are doing.

Our iniquities testify against us.] Confession fitly begins. All the difference betwixt God and us lies in this, *our iniquities*. Now, humble confession is one great article of pacification; it is a thing judgment certainly aims at, a thing mercy is mainly moved with. See Hos. v. 15; Psal. xxxii. 5; Jer. xxxi. 18.

When we are to encounter any enemy or difficulty, it is sin weakens us. Now, confession weakens it, takes away the power of accusations, anticipates the great Accuser, leaves him nothing to say, takes off the stroke of sins testifying against us, says, You need not, I confess all, and more than you can say.

For this, a right knowledge of God's law is requisite, and then a diligent use of it; laying it to our ways, as a straight rule to shew our unevenness, which, without it, we discern not. Set that glass before you, but withal beg light from Heaven to see by; otherwise our applications to this work of searching our hearts, and comparing them with the law, is but poring in the dark, where nothing is to be seen of our spots though we set the glass before us, and open the leaves of it. *The spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord;* Prov. xx. 27; but it is so when He lights it, and directs a man by it into himself, to see the secret corners and pollutions that lie hid within him. Sin discovered by this light, appears in its native vileness, and that makes lively resentments and confessions.

Their confession of sin is varied here in three several expressions, and no one of them is empty; the adding one to another, testifying a deep sense, and each of them having much under it, when issuing from an awakened, sensible mind.

Our iniquities testify against us.] This expresses a deep and clear conviction. Our iniquities are undeniable; they stand up and give in witness against us, and we cannot except against them, nor deny the charge they lay.

And thus it shall be with all transgressors in their day, and with each of us. It is not far off, our particular day, it is coming, when the most ignorant and impudent shall be forced to know, and the most obstinate and impudent shall be forced to acknowledge their iniquities. Such as now will not be warned and convince , who hide their sin as men, like Adam, who shew themselves in that his children, they (as he was) shall be called for, and forced to come out of the thickets, and convicted of their disobedience. This men find sometimes in a day of distress, when some outward or inward pressure seizes on them, lays on the arrest, and brings them to stand and hear what these witnesses have to say against them. However, there is a day coming for this at the long-run, a day of particular judgment for each one, and that great solemn day for all together: the light of that fiery day shall let them see to read the bill they would not look on sooner. If men would consider this, when sin is speaking them fair and enticing them, in how different a style it will afterwards speak, it would spoil the charm of it. As Solomon speaks of the *strange woman*, that *her end is bitter as wormwood*, (Prov. v. 4,) so are all the ways of sin. Those same sins which looked so pleasing and friendly, and entreat thee, shall appear again in another tune, and with other language, to witness against thee, and cry for vengeance. Men think sin evanishes as it is acted, and forget it as if they were to hear no more of it, and know not that it shall be forthcoming again, even thoughts, words, and actions. All is kept for a court-day, *iniquities sealed up in a bag*, as Job speaks, as writs to be produced in the process

against thee. Oh, how little know you what the amazement is of a man's sins surrounding him, and testifying against him, that he is a rebel against God, and to be condemned! And no scarcity, such multitudes of them, one company succeeding another, as that word, Job x. 17, *Thou renewest Thy witnesses against me;* not by twos or threes, but by thousands, armies of them. This is more affrightful than to be encompassed with drawn swords, or to see a whole army march up upon a man, it were nothing to these bands mustered up. So, Psal. l. 21. *I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes.*

There is no way to escape but by prevention, taking a day beforehand to judge thyself, and call these witnesses, and hear them, and pass sentence. This would save the labour. God is desirous to have the matter thus anticipated, and turns it over to thee, to judge thyself, that He may not judge. Why defer we? Is it not worth the while and the pains? And then for that day, when it would seem so terrible to have these witnesses stand up, thy safety is, having judged and condemned thyself, to take sanctuary in Christ, and make him thy advocate to answer all for thee. He can and will do it to the full; yea, he hath already answered all that thy sins, were they many more, can say. Oh, happy the man that takes this course! Sin not upon this account: none surely will do that. *These things I write unto you,* saith the Apostle, *that ye sin not;* but then, *if any man,* not so minded, *do sin,* here is that comfort, *we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* 1 John ii. 1.

Our backslidings are many.] This is the double dye of His people's sins; they are not simple transgressions, but treacheries, revolts, breaches of promises, of covenant and vow, turnings back, goings out from God, adultery, prostituting their hearts to idols, to base lusts; a heart professed to be married to its Maker, running a gadding after strange vanities. And who of us hath not this sadly to say against himself?—How often have I vowed myself Thine, and with some kind of

hopes and purpose to have been true to it; but how soon hath all evanished! Oh! the unspeakable unfaithfulness, not only of common formal professors, but of real believers! And these provoke God highly, go most to His heart, to be slighted by His own, to whom he hath so particularly shewn Himself and imparted of His love.

And we have sinned against Thee.] This that comes last, seems to sounds least; but I take it as meaning most: as if they would have offered at particular confession, and then seeing such a huge multitude, and no end, were forced to retire, and shut up all in this general word, We might and would speak of many things, but they are too many, we are overwhelmed. What shall we say? *We have sinned against Thee.* Thus Job, *I have sinned against Thee; what shall I do unto Thee?* As in David's confession, Psal. li. 4. *Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned;* THEE, the great, the holy God, our God. This were our business, instead of much discourse and debate of things, to fall down and confess unto God; to begin at ourselves, our own breaches and backslidings, and then to add the public national guiltiness. Oh! we are a sinful people, and few lay it to heart. All ranks are highly guilty; and where are they who retire and mourn for their abominations? Those, continued and multiplied, are the continuers and multipliers of our plagues, sword, and pestilence, and threatenings of famine. If you have a mind to do any thing for the land, and for yourselves, your families and little ones, Oh! apply to this work, to confess and bewail our iniquities. It may be, yea, I dare say, it shall be, the Lord will return and have mercy on us.

O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us.] In all our approaches unto God, it is a prime thing to take Him up according to His name. This is the very ground of the access and confidence of sinners, and there is no coming near Him without it. We have heard it, that *He is the Lord, merciful and gracious*, &c. Not so much as confessions can be made without this, much less petitions presented. Instead of com-

ing to fall down before Him, to acknowledge sin, the soul will run quite away, and though that were in vain, would seek to hide itself, that it might not at all appear. But apprehending His goodness and readiness to forgive, this draws the heart to Him, and being drawn in, this makes it melt before Him.—In this some Christians mistake much, when they hold off from the apprehensions of God's graciousness, to the end that they may be the more humble and deeply affected with their sins. No, no: this is that which warms, and softens, and makes the soul pliable, fit to receive any form from His hand. Therefore, the people of God, and the prophets in their name, still lay hold on that, and interweave it both with their confessions and their petitions, as the main ground of their confidence in presenting both.

The petition is in these two words, which begin and close—*Do for us—Leave us not.* The rest is argument, backing and pressing the petition with familiar and pathetic expostulations; and in them, the whole strength of the argument lies in a mutual interest, that they are His people, and He is their God. But take the words as they lie.

Do Thou for Thy name's sake.] It is not expressed *what* or *how*, and it is best so: that is referred to Him who knows what is best, which we do not. It is an act of grace in general that is sued for, but for the way and time, all is put in His hand. True it is, that sometimes prayer is, and must be, somewhat more particular, upon particular warrant, or upon account of the common liberty that God gives His children, to present freely the particular thoughts and desires of their hearts to Him. But it is good always to close thus, or that it be understood so when not expressed, that we resign that matter to Him, to make His own choice of things, and use His own way. Only, we entreat His favour, and His owning of us and our condition, that He be for us, and do for us. And this is safe and sweet, to let Him choose. We often perplex ourselves about that which lies not in our way, and is not our part to be busied in, what things shall be done. This he undertakes for,

and will be careful of. Be not afraid. Psal. xxxvii. 5. *Commit thy way, roll thy way upon the Lord, trust on the Lord*, and He will do it; there is no more. In the Hebrew it is, Turn it over to Him, and be quiet, and let Him alone, He will do well enough. Besides that there is all reason for it, if men knew what peace of spirit there is in this resignation, they would choose it before any way that can be thought on, and it never yet repented any one who chose it.

For Thy name's sake.] This is the unfailing argument, which abides always the same, and hath always the same force. When nothing is to be said for ourselves but guiltiness, yet, this name we may plead by. *Though our iniquities testify against us*, though they return us harsh answers as from Thee, speaking nothing but just refusals of our suits and rejecting of ourselves; yet, Lord, remember Thy own name, and from thence we look for a better answer. *Do* according to that, and *for Thy name's sake*, in regard of strangers and enemies, who will reproach Thy name in the ruin of thy people; and *for Thy name's sake*, in regard of Thy people's knowledge of it, and confidence in it, who, in all their straits, do expect their help from Thee. Thy promises made to them, and Thy covenant made with them, in these is *Thy name*, and they do cast themselves, and rely on it. Now see whether it may be for Thy glory to cast them off. Whatsoever *we* are, look to Thine own interest, and do for that; *Do for Thy name's sake.*

In the next clause, and more particularly, a part of His name is expressed, *The Hope of Israel.* That is a piece of his royal style, by which he is known in the world. And in this appeareth the wonderful condescension and bounty of God to His creatures, to choose a number of persons, that He will pass His word to engage himself to be theirs; not only to forgive us who are His debtors by our sins, but to become Himself a debtor to us by His promises. And He loves to be challenged on them, and pressed with them. It is a maxim of court-flattery, that mean persons ought not to urge a king upon his

word; but this greatest King takes nothing better from the meanest of his subjects. Lord, Thou hast undertaken the protection of us Thy people, and now it lies upon Thee, in point of honour and truth, to save us.

The Hope of Israel.] All people, and every man, have something they rely on and make their hope; and they often choose the most broken, rotten hopes, which fail while they lean upon them, and not only fail, but hurt them, as Egypt proved to Israel. Therefore it proved as a *broken reed*, which not only flew in pieces in their hand, but the splinter ran up into their hand and hurt them. How often have we found it thus, been disappointed, yea, wounded by our vain hopes, *pierced through with many sorrows*, as the Apostle speaks of those who love and trust in riches! Therefore Job disclaims this, that he never made gold his god: *If I made gold my hope.* Ch. xxxi. ver. 24. There is a word of one of his friends speaking, chap. xxii. ver. 25, rendered in our translation, *The Almighty shall be thy defence:* the word is in the original, *the Almighty shall be thy gold.* To those who account and make Him so, He is both; for they are rich enough in Him in the greatest scarcity, and safe enough in Him in the greatest danger.

But you who would look to it, inquire each of you well, what is thy hope, what thy heart readiest turns to, and cleaves to, to comfort itself in any distress. Yea, in the times of the greatest ease, what are thy thoughts most biassed and turned to, with oftenest and deepest delight? Canst thou say, It is to God?—that thy heart hath got that retreat, and is inured to that, is frequently there throughout the day, turns by, or passes over husband or wife, or children, or riches, or delights, or anything that would stand in thy way, and stays not till it be at Him, and there rejoices in His love, sits down under His shadow content and happy, willing that others should rule and share the world as they please? that thou dost not envy them, yea, canst even pity them, with all their gay hopes and great projects? yea, though thou do not find at all times, yea,

possibly, scarcely at any time, that sensible presence of God, and shining of His clear-discovered love upon thee, yet, that still He is thy hope, that thou art at a point with all the world, hast given up all to wait on Him, and hope for Him, and dost account thyself richer in thy simple hope, than the richest man on earth is in his possessions? Then art thou truly so, for the hope of God is Heaven begun, and Heaven complete is the possessing of Him.

The Saviour thereof.] Not exempting them from trouble, but saving *in time of trouble.* The reason for Israel's trouble lay in their own sin and security, and their abuse of ease and peace; but yet, they were not left to perish in trouble, but had *a Saviour in time of trouble,* who was then most eyed and considered, and found to be so. In the furnace, both the faith of His people, and the truth of His promises, are tried.

The children of God are much beholden to their troubles for clear experiences of themselves and of God. And in this, indeed, is the virtue of faith, to apprehend God as *a Saviour in time of trouble,* before He come forth and manifest Himself to be so.

Wicked men have their *times of trouble* too, even here, but have no title to this *Saviour. Suæ fortunæ fabri*—if themselves, or friends, or means can help them, it is well; but they can go no further. But the Church, the Israel of God, when all help fails on all hands, has one great resource that cannot fail, the strong God, her *Hope and Saviour in time of trouble,* or straitness. When there is no way out, He can cut out a way through the sea, can divide their enemies, or whatsoever is their greatest difficulty, and make a way through the middle of it. Well might Moses say, *Happy art thou, O Israel! Who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help?* Deut. xxxiii. 29. Men are under-saviours in outward deliverances; so it is said, Neh. ix. 27, *Thou gavest them saviours;* but He IS THE SAVIOUR. All others have their commissions from Him. All their

strength, and all their success, is from Him. Without Him, no strength, nor wit, nor courage, avail: all falls to pieces when He withdraws His hand. *Give us help from trouble, for*, says the Church, *vain is the help of man.* We have found this, if any people ever did, and have had real lectures to teach us to *cease from man; for wherein is he to be accounted of?* Yet, still we are ready to look to multitudes, or to the quality of men who undertake for us. But if we do so, yet shall that prove our shame and disappointment: and it shall never go well with us, till our dependence and confidence come clear off from all creatures, and we fix it entirely upon Him who is *our shield and our strength.*

Thus should a soul, in particular distress, especially in inward trouble, wherein the help lies most incommunicably and immediately in God's own hand, learn to trust Him. And though thou art not clear in thine interest as a believer, yet, plead thy interest as a sinner, which thou art sure of. God in our flesh hath enlarged the nation of Israel; all that will but *look to him*, He is their *Saviour: Look unto me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth.* Now, He hath styled himself the Saviour of sinners; press him by that: Lord, I do *look to thee*, do for me, O *Saviour!* Help, I am in trouble. So, in any particular temptation, either to sin, or to distrust because of sin, say, Now, Lord, here is an opportunity for Thy power and Thy grace to glorify itself. And though thou find thyself sinking, yet, believe, and thou shalt not drown.

Why shouldest Thou be as a stranger in the land?] The main thing desired was, His constant abode with them. Some passing deliverances He had wrought; but that was not enough. He came *as a stranger, to stay a night*, refreshed them with a transient visit, and away again. Thus we may say, He hath still done for us. When we were in desperate straits, He came and helped; but then we were left to such counsels as bred us new troubles. He hath not so evidently yet taken up His residence, though He hath built Him a house

amongst us, we trust, with that intention, do dwell with us. This we are to sue and entreat for.

Why art thou as one astonished?] Why art thou looking on our miseries as an amazed stranger, as not concerned in our affairs or condition, and not caring what becomes of us? *as a traveller*, but passing through, and having no further interest nor regard; or, *as a mighty man that cannot save*, as Samson after his hair was cut, either as wearied or bound, or somewhat hindered, though strong enough.

Now, Lord, look not on. Own our sufferings, and bestir Thyself. Make it appear that *Thou faintest not, neither art weary*, nor that anything can stand before Thee and be Thy hinderance. Break through our sins, the greatest hinderance of all; let not these stop Thy way, nor bind Thy hands. For *Thou art in the midst of us:* though we see Thee not so in Thy work as we desire, yet, here we know Thou art in Thy special good-will and power, as Thou art in our profession and homage done to Thee as our king amongst us. That testifies Thy presence. Thou canst not so hide Thyself, but there are still some characters of thy presence. *And we are called by Thy name, Thy people.* If we perish, Thy name being upon us, what becomes then of *it?* Therefore leave us not. Though Thou strike us, yet, stay with us, and we shall live in hope of favour and deliverance: if Thou go not away, our cries and prayers, at least our miseries, will move Thee.

These things make up our plea. We are a most unworthy people, yet, we are called by His name, are in covenant with Him; so, His glory is interested. We must not let go this. And what advantage so great, as to have our interest wrapped up in His? His glory and our safety are in one bottom, to sink and swim together; then, there is no hazard. Therefore, keep close to His interest and His covenant, and beg His staying with us, and arising for us, and lay hold on Him for this end. It is a pleasant violence; and were there many to use it towards Him, our deliverance were not far off.

SERMON XXVII.

Luke xiii. 1—10.

There were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

And Jesus answering, said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things?

I tell you, nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?

I tell you, nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

He spake also this parable: A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard, and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.

Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none; cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?

And he answering, said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it;

And if it bear fruit, well; and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.

It is no easy or common thing to give God's ways a right construction. For the most part, we either let them pass unobserved, or unframe our observations, looking through those principles and passions of our own, which give things another shape or colour than what is truly theirs. This was here the case. This sad accident should have been observed by them who heard it, and might have been spoken of by them to very good purpose; but our Saviour knew well what they meant by reporting the story, and what thoughts they had of it and of themselves, and by his answer, it would seem, all was not right with them.

The fact here related we have not any further account of in sacred history, nor any thing that we can clearly and certainly call it in any human writer. It is commonly conceived to have been done at Jerusalem, where Pilate abode, and that his power was exercised and done upon the followers of that Judas of Galilee spoken of, Acts v. 37, being such as denied it to be lawful to give obedience to the Roman empire, or to offer sacrifice for the interest and good of it. When they, it is likely, were coming together to offer at Jerusalem, and to maintain and to spread their opinion, Pilate comes upon them, and, while they were at the solemnity, makes a sacrifice of them to that authority they refused to sacrifice for: whether justly or not, we cannot determine; our Saviour does not; but if it was just, surely it was very tragical and severe, suitable to that character Philo gives of *his* disposition who acted it. [Ἀμείλικτον.] The straining of justice, commonly breaks it: a little of the other side, is, of the two, doubtless, the safer extreme.

However, this stroke and all others, as they come from the Supreme Hand, are righteous. Whatsoever be the temper or intent of the lower actor, and whatsoever be the nature of the action as from him, the sovereign hand of God is in them, and chief in them. Amos iii. 6. *Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?* And yet all evils, as *He* doth them, are both good and well done. Actions, whether voluntary or casual, as these two here, yet, do powerfully issue from the First Being and Worker, and, as from Him, are both unalterably certain and unquestionably just. Thus they who here report it, seemed to have judged of this passage, that it was a just punishment of sin. And our Saviour contests not about that, but rather seems to agree to them so far, and draws that warning out of it: he only corrects the misconceit it seems they were in, in thrusting it too far off from themselves, and throwing it too heavy upon those who sacrificed.

Think ye that they were sinners?] Though it were an error

to think that all temporal evils are intended of God as punishments of some particular guiltiness, and so to be taken as infallibly concluding against either persons or causes as evil, yet, certainly, the hand of God, either upon ourselves or others, is wisely to be considered, and it will very often be found a punishment pointing to the sin. And it is certainly an argument of very great stiffness and pride of heart, not to observe and acknowledge it, and a sure presage either of utter ruin, or, at least, of a heavier stroke. Any one who is set against the Lord, and will not be humbled, whether by what he sees on others, or what he feels on himself, shall find he hath an overmatch to deal with, that will either bow him or break him. Isa. xxvi. 11. *Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see; but they shall see and be ashamed for their envy at the people; yea, the fire of Thine enemies shall devour them.*

Think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt at Jerusalem?] Our Saviour goes not to search into the quarrel, and to condemn or justify either the one party or the other; that was not for his purpose. His aim was, to rectify the mistake of those he spoke to, and to draw forth from their own relation what was most proper for their use. Much of our hearing and telling of news hath little of this in it; and with most persons it doth not relish, to wind things that way. Some, even good persons, do accustom themselves, and take too much liberty, to an empty, fruitless way of entertainment in this kind. And if we make any remark, it commonly keeps abroad, comes not home to ourselves. Be it a judgment, be the persons great sinners in a sinful course, yet, they are not always the greatest of all because they suffer and others escape, as we readily think, and the Jews here concluded concerning those Galileans.

God is to be adored and reverenced, who useth His own freedom in this; He does injustice to none, yet, chooses them on whom He will do exemplary justice, and whom He will let pass, and gives not account of this to any. Some less wicked

have been ensamples to them who were much more wicked than they.

Do not flatter yourselves in the conceit of exemption from some stroke which others in the same way with you have fallen under, or even from some course which others have run and smarted in, and bear yourselves big upon the name of *God's people*. But tremble before the Lord, and search your own hearts. And let us think, though we may not be guilty of such public scandalous evils as others fall into, and are punished for, yet how full are we of secret malice, pride, and lust, &c., and let us wonder at the patience of God to ourselves, while multitudes have been swept away round about us. Think you that they who have died by sword or pestilence of late were greater sinners than we who are left behind? Oh, no! *but except we repent, we shall all likewise perish.* Enough of these arrows are still in God's arsenal, and though he use not these to us, yet remember, death, and judgment, and eternity are before us, and they call for wise and speedy consideration and repentance.

Oh! you who go on in your transgressions after all that is come upon us, who were drunkards and swearers, and are so yet, what think you? Because the heat of public judgments is abated, is there no more fear? Have you made a covenant with hell and death, and gained quarter of them, that they will not seize on you? Oh! that will never hold; they will not, they cannot, keep to you. And if you hold on your course when the day of visitation shall come, how much heavier shall it be by all this forbearance! You shall wish you had been cut off with the first. The day is at hand, when it shall be easier for them than for you. Only, the advantage is, that there is an exception yet sounding in your ears: *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

I beseech you, my brethren, enter into your own hearts, and be not always out of yourselves, and so, out of your wits. Consider the Lord's way and your own, and wonder at His goodness. Why am not I made an example to others, as well

as so many have been made examples to me? Now, let me fall down at his feet, and beg of him, that as he hath not made me an example of justice all this while, he may now make me an example of mercy and free grace to all that shall look on me.

Our Saviour, to their reported instance adds another himself, which was no doubt late and recent with them, to the same purpose, and in the same strain: *Think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.* Not just after the same particular manner, but the likeness is in *perishing*,—you shall as certainly perish as they are perished. And this, to many impenitent sinners, is verified in their being cut off, even by some temporal judgment, after long-abused forbearance, and often very like those they have seen instances of, and would not be warned by. Thus, it was fulfilled to many of the Jews, in the death of many thousands of them, and the destruction of their city by the Romans, in which there was much likeness with the two explanatory judgments here mentioned. But the universal and far more dismal *perishing* of unrepenting sinners, is, that death which lies unseen on the other side of that death we see and are so afraid to look on. Oh! saw we the other, this would appear nothing: it would be the only terrible of all terribles indeed. And how terrible soever, it is the unfailing attendant of impenitence. These God hath linked together, and no creature can sever them, continuance in sin and perishing, repentance and life. It is faith, indeed, that lays hold on our pardon and life in Christ, and by that we are justified and saved; yet, so as this is still true, so that the other no wise crosses it, that there is no life without repentance. And this wrongs not the Gospel at all, to preach and profess repentance; yea, it is a prime point of preaching the Gospel. And here we find the Great Preacher of the Gospel, who is himself the great substance and subject of the Gospel, this is his doctrine, *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.* There is no right preach-

ing of the Gospel, but the doctrine of repentance must be in it: the drawing and turning of the soul to God, from whom it is gone out by sin, this the Gospel aims at. And there is no right preaching of repentance, without the Gospel. The Law indeed discovers sin, but that is not enough to work repentance: for that, there must be a door of hope opened to a sinner, at which he may come in, hoping to be pardoned and accepted upon returning and submitting. This the Gospel alone does. And whensoever the prophets preached repentance, there was somewhat that always expressed or imported the notion of the Gospel, God declaring Himself reconciled, ready to forgive and receive him.

Now, not to speak of the nature of repentance, which here were pertinent, I shall only desire you to seek to know the nature of it, by feeling the power of it within you*. Oh! happy they that do! Were the sweetness of it known, we might persuade most by that; but that cannot be known, till we be persuaded and brought to repentance,—the delight there is in those tears, the pleasure in crucifying sin, even the most pleasant sins. The soul, then in its right motion when turning towards God, finds itself moved sweetly; but it is thrown, and distorted, and disappointed, in turning from Him and following sinful lusts. But here, necessity is the argument, the highest necessity. If it may be necessary for you *not to perish*, then it is necessary for you to *repent*. Had any of you an ulcer, though painful to be lanced, yet, if told *it must be*, else you would die, that would make a man call for it and entreat it. Lord, what is the madness of the minds of men! Do we believe that there is such a thing after all that is here, as *perishing* and *being saved*, eternal death and eternal life, and can we think on any thing else, so as to forget these, or to be negligent and unresolved concerning them, and yet, eat and please the flesh, and seek to make other things sure, and leave

* *Malo sentire compunctionem, quàm scire ejus definitionem.* I would rather *feel* compunction, than know its *definition*.—Thomas à Kempis.

these to their hazard? The God who made your hearts, persuade them! For who else can?

The parable that follows teaches the same doctrine of repentance, and that upon the motive of *patience* and *forbearance*. *He spake also this parable: A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard.* Particulars should not be overstrained and squeezed for morality. The main is God's dispensation, and His expectation in His orchard, the Church.

Our Saviour is much in this way of teaching. He calls in natural things to serve spiritual ends; and so all are fit to do, had we the faculty to extract it. A spiritual mind draws that which is symbolical with it, out of all. Such may fruitfully walk in gardens and orchards, and feed on the best, though they stir nothing. The great Lord is Himself the planter of His vineyard: His own hand sets each tree. And the soil is fruitful; there is sap and moisture. This is to be understood of His visible Church and ordinances; for the planting here signifies that. Christians are often compared to things living, growing, and fruitful; as to the vine and fig-tree, Isaiah v. &c. There is high engagement to be so, and real Christians are truly so.

And he sought fruit thereon.] Good reason had he so to do, having so planted it. Those trees which are left wild in the barren wilderness, no fruit is to be expected on them; at least no garden fruit, such as grows in the garden of God. Some natures have some kind of fruit, and some sweeter than others, but they are but wild figs. God's delight is to *come into His garden*, and there *eat His pleasant fruits*. Cant. iv. 16. Natural men may, after their fashion, be temperate, and patient, and charitable; but to believe on God, and love Him above themselves, and from such principles to do all they do, this is not to be expected.

Now, all that are planted in the Church of God, are in name such trees as should have their sap in them, that is, faith and love, and bear answerable fruits: they are called *trees of righteousness, and planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.*

Isa. lxi. 3. He himself knows who are indeed such, and knows that the rest can bear no such fruit; yet, in regard of outward dispensations and their own profession, He speaks after the manner of men; *he comes and seeks fruit.* Men who think they may live in the face of the Church, and make use of her ordinances, and yet be as excusably barren of all the fruits of holiness as if they grew upon a common heath, it is strange they should not conceive their own folly, and know that God reckons otherwise, and according to the ground He hath set them in, and the manuring He bestows on them, looks for some suitable fruit.

But the most are thus. They consider not what they are; think it a kind of impertinent importunity, to press them to holiness, to meekness, to bearing wrongs, to heavenly-mindedness, to spiritual activity, and usefulness to others. Why, it is strange. What think ye, my brethren, are we Christians, or are we not? We have a name that we are active, and are dead. Congregations are filled with such; and when the Lord *comes and seeks fruit*, in the greatest part He finds none. If lies, oaths, and cursings were the fruits, there are enough of these; but zeal for God, love to our brethren, self-denial, humility, if these be they, alas! where are they? So much preaching, sabbaths, fasts, and covenants; and where is fruit, *the fruits of the Spirit?* Oh! there are empty leaves, and some promising greenness, but the most belie the hope they give. And we of this land, who are engaged so high, what could have been done more for us? Though lying far north, yet have we much of the Gospel sunshine, and are bound by our own promise, and covenant, and solemn oath to God, to be more fruitful. Yet this is still broke. Who that had seen our first meltings into tears, or fair buds of stirring zeal, could have imagined we should have been so barren?

Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard.] Now the conference with the vine-dresser about it, though that is much for the fulness of the parable, yet may imply God's imparting of His thoughts concerning His Church, to His faithful minis-

ters. Such are included under that name here. For He blames not the vine-dresser as negligent, but complains of the barrenness of the tree. In the cutting down, there may be some pointing at church censure, but I conceive, it is rather to express God's purpose concerning the barren tree, than to give order or command about it. Doubtless, the Lord would have His vine-dressers sensible of the fruitfulness of His trees, though it be not by any notable neglect on their part.

These three years.] This expresses the great patience of God, that spares so long, and speaks not of *cutting down* at the very first. Thus, of long time hath He waited on many of us, many more years than to the strict number here named; on how many of us a great part of our lifetime! Whence is it that we are not afraid of this word here sounding, as it were, in our ears?—*Cut it down: why troubles it the ground?* As if He should say, It takes up room, and does no good, yea, hinders and prejudices others, as all ungodly, fruitless persons in the Church of God do.

The vine-dresser entreats and obtains one year more. This, the faithful labourers of God will not fail to do: to preaching to His people, they will join much prayer for them, that they may be made fruitful, and mean time be spared, and not perish in their unfruitfulness. They will double their endeavours in the sense of that danger; to all other pains will add this, the watering of them with tears. God is gracious, and easy to be entreated, and forbears yet, and waits. Oh! it is not too late. Any of you that at length are stirred up to any real desires of fruitfulness to Him, I dare give you warrant to be confident, not only of His forbearing upon such a desire, but of His favourable acceptance of it as a good sign, yea, as already a beginning of fruit. Indeed, in case of people's remaining barren after all, the end will be to be *cut down;* and to every fruitless and godless person amongst you, it is not long to that day; it will be upon you before you are aware. As John preached, *The axe is laid unto the root of the trees; therefore, every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn*

down, and cast into the fire. Matt. iii. 10. God is taking His axe, as it were, and fetching His stroke at you, and you know not how soon it may light, and you be cut down, and cut off from all hopes for ever, never to see a day of grace more, nor hear a sermon more,—cut down and cast into the fire to burn, and that never to end. Oh for some soul to be rescued, were it even now! Oh! *To-day, To-day, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.*

Real Christians, though not altogether barren,—that is impossible,—yet, are not so plentifully fruitful; there is little of *the increase of God,* such as He may be invited to His garden for, such as the vine-dressers may rejoice in, yea, the Master himself. The Lord maketh a kind of boast of us, as men will do of trees in their gardens, that they have much fruit, though possibly have a meaner appearance and shew than most of the rest. Oh, what a joy and glory were it to our God, to have unobserved, obscure Christians abounding in sweet spiritual fruits, laden with fruit, and hanging down the head, stooping the lower, still the more humble for it; referring all to Himself, living to Him, doing all for Him! But, alas! we are empty vines, bringing forth fruit to ourselves, serving our own wills and humours, and barren to Him. But for this end are we *planted in the house of God,* and ingrafted into the Son of God, that blessed, living Root, to be fruitful to His praise. It is His credit: *Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.* John xv. 8.

Now, for this are requisite, 1*st*, Much prayer. For though here He speaks as an ordinary master, yet it is His secret influence which does all, Hos. xiv. 8. *From Me is thy fruit found;* and prayer draws down that. 2*dly*, Much faith in Christ, living to him, and drawing sap from him. Such as do all in his strength, and are much in application and attraction, shall be found the most abundant in all choice and sweet fruits; they who *abide in him,* that is, who, in the very actings of faith, are more in him than many others who yet are *in* him. But, alas! this is a thing of which men speak much, and know little.

SERMON XXVIII.

PREACHED BEFORE MY LORD COMMISSIONER AND THE PARLIAMENT, 14TH NOVEMBER, 1669.

JOHN xxi. 22.

——What is that to thee? Follow thou Me.

OF all that ever lived on earth, the most blessed was this handful and small company our Lord chose for his constant attendants, to see his divine miracles, enjoy his sweetest company, and to hear his divine doctrine. What a holy flame of love must have burned in their hearts, who were always so near the Sun of Righteousness! It was indeed a sad hour, wherein that was eclipsed, and the Lord of life lay dead in the grave. And what a deluge of joy was in their hearts when he rose again! And what a transport was it when they saw him ascend, and a shining cloud kissing his feet, and parting him from them! In the interval, as he had risen himself, so he is raising them from their unbelief. St. Peter, not content with a bare forsaking of his Lord, had also denied him. But he falls not a quarrelling, but speaks of love to him, and blows up these sparks of love with this threefold question, *Lovest thou me?* St. Peter answers fervently, but most modestly, whereupon his Lord gives him a service suitable to his love, *Feed my sheep;* for which none are qualified but they that love him. But when he grows bold to ask a question, he gets a grave check, and a holy command, *What is that to thee? Follow thou me.* This was a transient stumbling in one who, but lately recovered of a great disease, did not walk firmly. But it is the common track of most, to wear out their days with impertinent inquiries. There is a natural desire in men to know the things of others, and to neglect their own, and to be more concerned

about things to come, than about things present. And this is the great subject of conversation. Even the weakest minds must descant upon all things; as if the weakest capacities could judge of the greatest matters, by a strange levelling of understandings, more absurd and irrational than that of fortunes! Most men are beside themselves, never at home, but always roving. It is true, a man may live in solitude to little purpose, as Domitian catching flies in his closet. Many noisome thoughts break in upon one when alone; so that when one converseth with himself, it had need be said, *Vide ut sit cum bono viro.* A man alone shall be in worse company than are in all the world, if he bring not into him better company than himself or all the world, which is the fellowship of God and the Holy Spirit. Yet the matters of the Church seem to concern all, and so indeed they do; but every sober man must say, all truths are not alike clear, alike necessary, nor of a like concernment to every one. Christians should keep within their line. Whether it be the will of our Great Master, that the order that hath been so long in the Church continue in it or not, *What is that to thee?* It is certainly a great error, to let our zeal run out from the excellent things of religion, to matters which have little or no connexion with them. A man, though he err, if he do it calmly and meekly, may be a better man than he who is stormy and furiously orthodox. Our business is to follow Jesus, and to trace his life upon earth, and to wait his return in the clouds. Had I a strong voice, as it is the weakest alive, yea, could I lift it up as a trumpet, I would sound a retreat from our unnatural contentions and irreligious strivings for religion. Oh! what are the things we fight for, compared to the great things of God? There must be a great abatement of the inwards of religion, when it runs wholly to a scurf. God forbid any should think, that except all be according to our mind, we must break the bond of peace. If we have no kindness to our brethren, yet, let us have pity on our mother, and not tear her bowels. And indeed, next to the grave and the silent

shades of death, a cottage in some wilderness is to be wished for, to mourn for the pride and passion of mankind. How do the profane wretches take advantage from our breaches! But, if there be such here, because of the weakness, folly, and passions of some men, is it folly to follow Jesus? Are some ridiculous, and for that will you turn religion into ridicule? If you do, it will at least turn to a *Sardonic* laughter. Because we contend for a little, is the whole an invention? Will the pillars be brangled because of the swarms of flies that are about them?

There is an Eternal Mind that made all things, that stretched out the heavens, and formed the spirit of man within him. Let us tremble before him, and love the Lord Jesus. Our souls have indelible characters of their own excellency in them, and deep apprehensions of another state, wherein we shall receive according to what we have done upon earth. Was not Jesus, the Son of God, declared to be such by his miracles, but chiefly by his resurrection from the dead? Hath there not been received and transmitted to us, through all ages, many martyrs following him through racks and fires, and their own blood, to his glory? And shall we throw off all these? Better be the poorest, weakest, and most distempered person upon earth, with the true fear of God, than the greatest wit and highest mind in the world, if profane, or, though not such, if void of any just or deep sense of the fear of God, *For a living dog is better than a dead lion.* Some religious persons are perhaps weak persons, yet, in all ages, there have been greater nobles and more generous souls truly religious, than ever were in the whole tribe of atheists and libertines.

Let us therefore follow the holy Jesus. Our own concernments concern us not, compared to this. *What is that to thee?* may be said of all things besides this. All the world is one great impertinency to him who contemplates God and his Son Jesus. Great things, coaches, furniture, or houses, concern the outward pomp or state of the world, but not the necessities of life; neither can they give ease to him that is pinched

with any one trouble. He that hath twenty houses, lies but in one at once. He that hath twenty dishes on his table, hath but one belly to fill. So it is, *ad supervacua sudatur.* All are uncertain: sudden storms fall on, and riches fly away as a bird to heaven, and leave those who look after them, sinking to hell in sorrow.

A Christian is solicitous about nothing. If he be raised higher, it is that he desires not; if he fall down again, he is where he was. A well-fixed mind, though the world should crack about him, shall be in quiet. But when we come to be stretched on our death-bed, things will have another visage. It will pull the rich from his treasure, strip the great of his robes and glory, and snatch the amorous gallant from his fair, beloved mistress, and from all we either have or grasp at. Only sin will stick fast and follow us. Those black troops will clap fatal arrests on us, and deliver us over to the jailor. Are these contrivances, or the dark dreams of melancholy? All the sublimities of holiness may be arrived at, by the deep and profound belief of these things. Let us, therefore, ask, have we walked thus, and dressed our souls by this pattern?

But this hath a nearer aspect to pastors, who should be copies of the fair original, and second patterns, who follow nearer Christ. They should be imitating him in humility, meekness, and contempt of the world, and particularly, in affection to souls, feeding the flock of God. Should we spare labour when he spared not his own blood? how precious must the sheep be, who were bought at so high a rate as the blood of God! Oh, for more of this divine and evangelic heat, instead of our distempered heat. This is the substance of religion, to imitate Him whom we worship. Can there be a higher or nobler design in the world, than to be God-like, and like Jesus Christ? He became like us, that we might be the more like him. He took our nature upon him, that he might transfuse his into us. His life was a track of doing good, and suffering ill. He spent the days in preaching and healing, and often the nights in prayers. He was *holy, harmless, and undefiled, and separate*

from sinners. How then can heirs of wrath follow the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world? Humility, meekness, and charity were the darling virtues of Christ. He came to expiate and to extirpate our pride; and when that Majesty did so humble himself, shall a worm swell? No grace can be where the mind is so swelled with this airy tumour. He was meek, and reviled not again; nor did he vent his anger, though he met with the greatest injuries. The rack of his cross could make him confess no anger against those who were draining him of his life and blood: all he did was to pray for them. Charity was so dear to him, that he recommended it as the characteristic by which all might know his disciples, *if they loved one another.* But alas! by this may all know we are not his disciples, because we hate one another. But that we may imitate him in his life, we must run the back-trade, and begin with his death, and must die with him. Love is a death. He that loves, is gone and lost in God, and can esteem or take pleasure in nothing besides Him. When the bitter cup of the Father's wrath was presented to our Lord, one drop of this elixir of love and union to the Father's will sweetened it so, that he drank it over without more complaining. This death of Jesus, mystically acted in us, must strike down all things else, and he must become our all. Oh, that we would resolve to live to him that died, and to be only his, and humbly to follow the crucified Jesus! All else will be quickly gone. How soon will the shadows that now amuse us, and please our eyes, fly away!

SERMON XXIX.

MATTHEW xxii. 37, 39.

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.

THE wisdom and meekness of our Saviour is the more remarkable, and shines the brighter, by the malice of his adversaries; and their cavils and tempting questions occasion our benefit and instruction. Thus was it here.

We see, the words are the sum of the whole Law, and they are taken out of the book of the Law. They are called *two commandments:* the former is the sum of the first, the latter, of the second table. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God. That is,* says our Saviour, *the first and great commandment.* Our first obligation is to God, and then, through Him and for His sake, to men.

The second is like unto it.] Seems it not rather contrary than like to the former? Whereas in the former, the whole stream of love is directed in one undivided current towards God, this other commandment seems to cut out a new channel for it, and to turn a great part of it to men: *Thy neighbour as thyself.* No, they are not contrary, if we take them right; yea, they do not only agree, but are inseparable. They do not divide our love, but they set it in its right course; first, wholly to God, as the sovereign good, and only for Himself worthy to be loved; and then, back from Him, it is, according to His own will, derived downwards to our neighbour. For then only we love both ourselves and others aright, when we make our love to Him the reason and the rule of both*. So then, our

* Minus enim te amat, qui aliquid præter te amat, et non propter te. Incipiat homo amare Deum, et non amabit in homine nisi Deum — AUGUSTINE.

love is not to be immediately divided betwixt Him and our neighbour, or any creature, but is first of all to be bestowed on Him, and then He diffuses, by way of reflection, so much of it upon others as He thinks fit. Being all in His hands, it is at His disposal; and that which He disposes elsewhere, (as here, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,*) it is not taken off from Him, but abiding still in Him, as in its natural place, (as light doth in the sun,) flows forth from Him by such an emanation as divides it not; as beams flow forth from the sun and enlighten the air, and yet, are not cut off from it.

So then, the second is like unto the first, because it springs from it, and depends on it. It commands the same affection; love, in the former, placed on God, and in this, extended from Him to our neighbour. And it is like unto it in this too; that as the former is the sum of the first Table, and so the first and great commandment, so this is the sum of the second Table, and therefore next unto it in greatness and importance.

All the precepts that can be found in the Law and the Prophets, are reducible to these, and all obedience depends upon this love. 1. Consider this, how these are the sum of this Law. 2. Consider them particularly in themselves.

Not only because it is love that facilitates all obedience, and is the true principle of it, that makes it both easy to us, and acceptable to God; but besides this, that love disposes the soul for all kinds of obedience, this very act of love is in effect all that is commanded in the Law. For the first, laid to the first Table, it is so much one with the first commandment, that it expresses most fitly the positive of it, opposite to that which is there forbidden: *Thou shalt have no other gods before Me*— but shalt have Me alone for thy God, or bestow all divine affection, and all worship that is the sign and expression of it, upon Me only. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,* and if thou lovest Me alone, thou wilt not decline to any kind of false worship. That were to vitiate thy affection, and to break that conjugal love and fidelity to which thou art

bound by covenant, being My people as by a spiritual marriage. Therefore is idolatry so frequently called, in the phrase of the prophets, *adultery* and *uncleanness*.

And, in the letter of that second commandment, the Lord uses that word which in its usual sense is conjugal, and relates to marriage, *I am a jealous God;* and, in the close of that precept, expresseth particularly this affection of love, as particularly interested in it, though extended to all the rest, *I shew mercy to thousands of them that love me.*

Is it not a genuine property of love, to honour and respect the name of those whom we love? And therefore, it is altogether inconsistent with the love of God, to vilify and abuse His name.

They that understand the true use of that holy rest, of the sabbath-day, do know that it frees the soul, and makes it vacant from earthly things for this purpose, that it may fully apply itself to the worship and contemplation of God, and converse with Him at greater length. Then, certainly, where there is this entire love to God, this will not weigh heavy, will be no grievous task to it: it will embrace and gladly obey this fourth commandment, not only as its duty, but as its great delight. For there is nothing that love rejoices in more, than in the converse and society of those on whom it is placed: it would willingly bestow most of its time that way, and thinks all hours too short that are spent in that society. Therefore not only they who profanely break, but they who keep it heavily and wearily, who find it rather a burden than a delight, may justly suspect that the love of God is not in them; but he that keeps His day cheerfully, and loves it, because on it he may more liberally solace and refresh himself in God, may safely take it as an evidence of his love to God.

Now, that, after the same manner, the love of our neighbour is the sum of the second Table, the Apostle St. Paul proves it for us clearly and briefly, Rom. xiii. 9, 10. All the commandments touching our neighbour, are for the guarding of him from evil and injury. Now, *Love worketh no ill to his*

neighbour; therefore, Love is the fulfilling of the Law. He that truly loves his neighbour as himself, will be as loath to wrong him as to wrong himself, either in that honour and respect that is due to him, or in his life, or chastity, or goods, or good name, or to lodge so much as an unjust desire or thought, because that is the beginning and conception of real injury. In a word, the great disorder and crookedness of the corrupt heart of man, consists in self-love: it is the very root of all sin both against God and man, for no man commits any offence, but it is in some way to profit or please himself. It was a high enormity of self-love, that brought forth the very first sin of mankind. That was the bait which took more than either the colour or the taste of the apple, that it was desirable for knowledge: it was in that, that the main strength of the temptation lay, *Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.* And was it not deep self-love to affect that? And it is still thus: though we feel the miserable fruits of that tree, the same self-love possesses us still; so that, to please our own humours and lusts, our pride, or covetousness, or voluptuousness, we break the law of God, the law of piety, and of equity and of charity to men. Therefore the Apostle, foretelling the iniquities and impieties of the last times, *that men shall be covetous, boasters,* &c., and *lovers of pleasures, more than lovers of God,*—sets that on the front, as the chief, leading evil, and the source of all the rest—*lovers of their ownselves: Men shall be lovers of themselves,* therefore, *covetous;* and *lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God,* because *lovers of their ownselves.* 2 Tim. iii. 2. Therefore, this is the sum of that which God requires in His holy Law, the reforming of our love, which is the commanding passion of the soul, and wheels all the rest about with it in good or evil.

And its reformation consists in this, in recalling it from ourselves unto God, and reflecting it from God to our brethren. Loving ourselves sovereignly by corrupt nature, we are enemies to God, and haters of Him, and cannot love our neighbours but only in reference to ourselves, and so far as it pro-

fits or pleaseth us to do so, and not in order and respect unto God. The highest and the true redress of this disorder, is that which we have here in these two precepts as the substance of all; first, that all our love ascend to God, and then, that what is due to men descend from thence, and so, passing that way, it is purified and refined, and is subordinated and conformed to our love of Him above all, which is *the first and great commandment.*

Here we have the supreme Object of love, to whom it is due—*The Lord thy God*, and the measure of it, which is indeed to know no measure*—*With all thy heart, all thy soul, and all thy mind.* For which, in Deut. vi. 5, we have *all thy strength.* Luke hath both. The difference is none, for all mean that the soul, and all the powers of it, should unite and combine themselves in their most intense and highest strength, to the love of God, and that all the workings of the soul and actions of the whole man be no other than the acting and exercise of this love.

He accounts not nor accepts of anything we can offer Him, if we give not the heart with it; and He will have none of that neither, unless He have it all. And it is a poor all, when we have given it, for the great God to accept of. If one of us had the affection of a hundred, yea, of all the men in the world, yet could he not love God in a measure answerable to His full worth and goodness. All the glorified spirits, angels, and men, that are or shall be, in their perfections, loving Him with the utmost extent of their souls, do not altogether make up so much love as He deserves. Yet He is pleased to require our heart, and the love we have to bestow on Him; and though it is infinitely due of debt, yet He will take it as a gift: *My son, give me thy heart.* Prov. xxiii. 26.

Therefore, the soul that begins to offer itself to Him, although overwhelmed with the sense of its own unworthiness

* Modus est nescire modum, subtiliùs ista distinguere facile est magis quàm solidum.

and the meanness of its love, yet may say, Lord, I am ashamed of this gift I bring Thee, yet, because Thou callest for it, such as it is, here it is; the heart and all the love I have, I offer unto Thee, and had I ten thousand times more, it should all be Thine. As much as I can I love Thee, and I desire to be able to love Thee more. Athough I am unworthy to be admitted to love, yet, Thou art most worthy to be loved by me, and besides, thou dost allow, yea, commandest me to love Thee. My loving of Thee adds nothing to Thee, but it makes me happy; and though it be true, the love and the heart I offer Thee is infinitely too little for Thee, yet, there is nothing besides Thee enough for it.

The Lord, or *Jehovah*, *thy God.*] There lie the two great reasons of love, τὸ ἀγαπητόν and τὸ ἴδιον—*Jehovah*, the Spring of being and goodness, infinitely lovely; all the beauty and excellencies of the creatures are but a drop of that ocean; —and, *Thy God*, to all of us the Author of our life, and of all that we enjoy; who spread forth those heavens that roll about us and comfort us with their light, and motions, and influences, and established this earth that sustains us; who furnisheth us with food and raiment, and, in a word (and it is the Apostle's, Acts xvii. 25), who *gives us* ζωὴν καὶ πνοὴν καὶ τὰ πάντα, *life, and breath, and all things;* and, to the believer, *his* God in a nearer propriety, by redemption and peculiar covenant. But our misery is, the most of us do not study and consider Him, what He is in Himself and what to us; and therefore we do not love Him, because we know Him not.

And thy neighbour as thyself.] If we will not confess nor suspect ourselves, how much we are wanting in the former, yet, our manifest defect in this latter will discover it. Therefore, the Apostle, Rom. xiii. 10, speaks of this as all, because, though inferior to the other, yet connected with it, and the surest sign of it. For these live and die together. The Apostle St. John is express in it, and gives those hypocrites the lie plainly: *If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother,*

he is a liar. 1 John iv. 20. We have no real way of expressing our love to God, but in our converse with men and in the works of love towards them.

Certainly, that sweet affection of love to God cannot consist with malice and bitterness of spirit against our brethren. No, it sweetens and calms the soul, and makes it all love every way.

As thyself.] As truly both wishing and, to thy power, procuring his good, as thy own. Consider how much unwilling thou art to be injured or defamed, and have the same thoughts for thy brother; be as tender for him. But how few of us aspire to this degree of charity!

Thy very enemies are not here excluded. If self-love be still predominant in thee, instead of the love of God, then thou wilt make thine own interest the rule of thy love; so, when thou art, or conceivest thou art wronged by any one, the reason of thy love ceaseth. But if thou love for God, that reason abides still *. God hath commanded me to love my enemies, and He gives me His example; He does good to the wicked who offend Him.

And this is indeed a trial of our love to God. One hath marred thee; that gives thee to think that thou hast no cause to love him for thyself; be it so, self-love forbids thee, but the love of God commands thee to love him. God says, If thou lovest Me, love him for My sake. And if thy love to God be sincere, thou wilt be glad of the occasion to give so good a testimony of it, and find a pleasure in that which others account so difficult and painful.

* Amicus diligendus in Deo, et inimicus propter Deum.—AUGUSTINE.

SERMON XXX.

HEBREWS viii. 10.

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord: I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.

The two great evils that perplex sensible minds, are, the guiltiness of sin, and the power of it. Therefore, this new covenant hath in it two promises opposite to these two evils; free pardon to remove the guilt of sin, and the subduing of its power by the law of God written in the heart. Of this latter only, for the present. Having spoken somewhat of the sense of the Law in the Ten Commandments, and of the sum of it in Two, this remains to be considered as altogether necessary for obedience, and without which, all hearing and speaking, and all the knowledge of it, will be fruitless. Though it be made very clear and legible without, we shall only read it, and not at all keep it, unless it be likewise written within.

Observe, in the first place, the agreement of the Law with the Gospel. The Gospel bears the complete fulfilling of the Law, and the satisfying of its highest exactness, in our surety Jesus Christ, so that, in that way, nothing is abated; but besides, in reference to ourselves, though it take off the rigour of it from us, because answered by another for us, yet, it doth not abolish the rule of the Law, but *establisheth* it, Rom. iii. 31. It is so far from tearing or blotting out the outward copies of it, that it writes it anew, where it was not before, even *within*, sets it upon the heart in sure and deep characters. We see this kind of writing of the Law, is a promise for the days of the Gospel, cited out of the prophet Jeremiah, Ch. xxxi. ver. 33.

There is indeed no such writing of the Law in us, or keeping of it by us, as will hold good for our justification in the sight of God; therefore, that other promise runs combined with it, the free forgiveness of iniquity. But again, there is no such forgiveness as sets a man free to licentiousness and contempt of God's Law, but, on the contrary, binds him more strongly to obedience; therefore, to that sweet promise of the pardon of sin, is inseparably joined this other of the inward writing of the Law. The heart is not washed from the guiltiness of sin in the blood of Christ, that it may wallow and defile itself again in the same puddle, but it is therefore washed, that the tables or leaves of it may be clean, for receiving the pure characters of that Law of God which is to be written on it.

Concerning this writing, there are three things you may mark. 1. What it is. 2. What is its necessity. 3. Who is its writer.

1. What it is. The writing of the Law in the heart, is briefly no other than the renewing and sanctifying of the heart by the infusion of grace, which is a heavenly light that gives the soul to know God aright. And that is added here, as the same with the writing of the law in the heart, and an illustration of it, *They shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.* And this light bringeth heat with it*. That right knowledge of God being in the soul, begets in it love to Him, and love is the same with the fulfilling of the whole Law. It takes up the whole soul: *I will put it in their mind, and write it in their hearts.* If we will distinguish these, then it is that they shall both *know* it and *love* it. It shall not be written anew in their heads, and go no deeper, but be written in their hearts. But we may well take both expressions for the whole soul; for this kind of knowledge and love are inseparable, and where the one is, the other cannot be wanting.

* Lux est vehiculum caloris.

So, then, a supernatural, sanctified knowledge of God, is the Law of God written in the heart. When it comes and entertains Him as holy within it, then it hath not a dead letter of the Law written in it, but νόμον ἔμψυχον, the Lawgiver Himself: His name and will are engraven on it throughout, on every part of it. All that they know of God, shall not be by mere report, and by the voice of others, but they shall inwardly read and know Him within themselves. Which (by the by) makes not the public teaching and work of the ministry superfluous to any, even to those who know most of God, but signifies only this; that all they that do indeed receive and believe the Gospel, are inwardly enlightened by the Spirit of God to understand the things of God, and have not their knowledge on bare trust of others who instruct them, without any particular persuasion and light within, but what they hear of spiritual things, they shall understand and know after a spiritual manner. And the universality of the promise signifies, that this kind of knowledge should be more frequently and more largely bestowed in the days of the Gospel, than it was before.

2. The necessity of writing the Law on the heart. Although there be in the natural conscience of man some dim characters of the Law, convincing him of grosser wickednesses, and leaving him inexcusable, of which the Apostle speaks, Rom. ii. 15; yet, he is so far, naturally, from the right knowledge of God and the love of His whole Law, that, instead of that knowledge, his mind is full of darkness, and, contrary to that love, his heart is possessed with a natural enmity and antipathy against the Law of God. Eph. iv. 18; Rom. viii. 7. There is a law within him directly opposite, which the Apostle calls the *law of sin*. Rom. vii. 23; sin ruling and commanding the heart and whole man, making laws at its pleasure*, and obtaining full obedience. Therefore, of necessity, before a man can be brought to obey the holy Law of God, the inward frame of his heart must be changed, the

* Tolerabis iniquas interius leges.

corrupt law of sin must be abrogated, and the soul must renounce obedience to it, and give itself up wholly, [εἰς τύπον,] to receive the stamp and impression of the law of God; and then, having it written within upon his heart, his actions will bear the resemblance, and be conformable unto it.

In this promise which God makes to His people, He hath regard to the nature of that obedience which He requires. Because He will have it sincere and cordial, therefore He puts a living principle of it within, writes His law in the heart, and then it is, in the words and actions, derived from thence, and is more in the heart than in them. The first copy is in the heart, and all the other powers and parts of a man follow that, and so, by that means, as it is sincere, so it is universal. The heart is that which commands all the rest; and, as the vital spirits flow from it to the whole body, thus, the Law of God, being written in it, is diffused through the whole man. It might be in the memory, or in the tongue, and not in the rest; but put it in the heart, and then it is undoubtedly in all.

Its being written in the heart, makes the obedience likewise universal in the object, as they speak, in respect to the whole law of God. When it is written only without a man, he may read one part and pass over another, may possibly choose to conform to some part of the Law, and leave the rest; but when the full copy of it is written in his heart, then it is all one Law. And as in itself it is inseparable, as St. James teacheth us, Jam. ii. 10, so, it is likewise in his esteem and affection and endeavour of obedience: he hath regard unto all the commandments as one. Because of his love to the Law of God, *he hates*, not only some, but *every false way*, as David speaks, Psal. cxix. 104. He that looks on the Law without him, will possibly forbear to break it while others look upon him; his obedience lies much in the beholder's eye; but he that hath the Law written within, cannot choose but regard it as much in secret as in public. Although his sin might be hid from the knowledge and censure of men, yet still, it were violence done to that pure Law that is within his breast, and

therefore he hates it alike as if it were public. This is the constant enemy of all sin, this law within him. Psal. cxix. 11. *I have hid Thy law in my heart*, says David, *that I might not sin against Thee.* It makes a man abate nothing of his course of obedience and holiness because unseen; but like the sun that keeps on its motion when it is clouded from our eyes, as well as when we see it.

In a word, this writing of the Law in the heart makes obedience a natural motion, I mean, by a new nature: it springs not from outward constraints and respects, but from an inward principle, and therefore, not only is it universal and constant, but cheerful and easy. The Law, only written in tables of stone, is hard and grievous; but make once the heart the table of it, and then there is nothing more pleasing. This Law of God makes service delightful, even the painfullest of it. Psal. xl. 8. *I delight to do Thy will, O my God; yea, Thy law is within my heart.* The sun, which moves with such wonderful swiftness, that to the ignorant it would seem incredible to hear how many thousands of miles it goes each hour, yet, because it is naturally fitted for that course, it comes, as the Psalmist speaks, *like a bridegroom forth of his chamber, and rejoices, as a strong man, to run a race.* Psal. xix. 5. If the natural man be convinced of the goodness and equity of the Law of God, yet, because it is not written within, but only commands without, it is a violent motion to him to obey it, and therefore he finds it a painful yoke. But hear David, in whose heart it was, speak of it: how often doth he call it his *delight* and his *joy!*

If any profane persons object to a godly man his exact life, that it is too precise, as if he wrote each action before he did it, he may answer, as Demosthenes did to him that objected he wrote his orations before he spake them, That he was not at all ashamed of that, although they were not only written, but engraven beforehand. Certainly, the godly man lives by this Law which is written and engraven on his heart, and he needs not be ashamed of it.

It is true, the renewed man, even he that hath this Law deepest written in his heart, yet, while he lives here, is still molested with that inbred Antinomian, that law of sin that yet dwells in his flesh: though the force and power of it is broken and its law repealed in his conversion, and this new pure Law placed in its stead, yet, because that part which is flesh in him still entertains and harbours it there, it creates and breeds a Christian daily vexation. Because sin hath lost dominion, it is still practising rebellion against that spiritual kingdom and law that is established in the regenerate mind: as a man that hath once been in possession of rule, though usurped, yet, being subdued, he is still *working* in that kingdom to turbulent practices. But though by this (as the Apostle was, Rom. vii. 4) every godly man is often driven to sad perplexities and complaints, yet, in this is his comfort; that law of his God written there, hath his heart and affection. Sin is dethroned and thrust out of his heart, and hath only an usurped abode within him against his will. He sides with the Law of God, and fights with all his power for it against the other. That holy Law is his delight, and this law of sin his greatest grief.

3. The Writer: *I will write:* The Lord promises Himself to do this, and it is indeed His prerogative. He wrote it at first on tables of stone, and this spiritual engraving of it on the heart is much more peculiarly His. Other men might afterwards engrave it on stone, but no man can at all write it on the heart, not upon his own, much less upon another's. Upon his own he cannot, for it is naturally taken up and possessed with that contrary law of sin, (as we said before,) and is willingly subject to it, loves that law, and therefore, in that posture, it neither can nor will work this change upon itself to dispossess that law which it loves, and bring in that which it hates. No man can write this law on the heart of another, for it is inaccessible: his hand cannot reach it, he cannot come at it: how then shall he write any thing on it? Men, in the ministry of the word, can but stand and call without: they

cannot speak to within, far less write any thing within. Though they speak never so excellently and spiritually, and express nothing but what is written on their own hearts, (and certainly, that is the most powerful way of speaking, and the likeliest for making an impression on the heart of another,) yet, unless the hand of God's own Spirit carry it into the hearer's heart, and set on the stamp of it there, it will perish as a sound in the air, and effect nothing*. Let this ever be acknowledged to His glory. The voice of men may beat the ear, but only He who made the heart can work upon it, and change and mould it as it pleaseth Him. This is His own promise, and He alone makes it good. He writes His Law on the hearts of His children, and by this work of His grace prepares them for glory. They who have this Law written in their hearts, their names are certainly written in the Book of Life.

SERMON XXXI.

Hosea v. 15.

I will go and return to my place till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.

There is nothing we more hardly learn, and whereof we have more need to be taught, than to judge aright concerning our own dealing with God, and God's dealing with us; to know and acknowledge the perverseness and folly of our own ways, and the wisdom and goodness of His ways. Therefore, the sermons of the prophets insist much on this, to convince the people of God, to whom they were sent, of both these; and

* Sonus verborum nostrorum aures percutit, magister intus. Nolite putare quenquam hominem aliquid discere ab alio homine: admonere possumus per strepitum vocis nostræ, si non est intus qui doceat, inanis strepitus est noster.—Augustine.

by this, to persuade them to repentance. This is evidently here the Prophet's aim. The whole chapter, with the following, contains a pathetic remonstrance of God's just quarrel with His people, aggravated by much long-suffering and lenity, and many warnings, verbal and real, on his part, and much stubbornness, impenitence, and multiplied provocation on theirs, He using all means to reclaim and save them, and they using all means to despise Him and ruin themselves. The plea is against both the kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

In these words we have the Lord, after much reasoning and trial of milder ways, which prevailed not with them, concluding upon a severe course, as being found necessary, and such as would be more effectual for their conversion. The words contain these three things: I. The procuring cause of God's afflicting his people. II. His way of afflicting them. III. The end of it.

I. The procuring cause is made up of these two—Sin and Impenitence. *I will go till they acknowledge their offences.* So that, if they had not committed those provoking sins, or, having committed them, had humbly acknowledged or repented them, this labour of afflicting them had been saved; but these sins once committed and often repeated, and their being not so much as once acknowledged, and all this by God's own peculiar people, cannot but draw on heavy afflictions.

1st. We may see how unwilling God is to afflict His people. Judgments are termed *His strange work*, but mercy is His darling attribute. When God exercises punitive acts against His people, the Scripture represents, as it were, a kind of reluctance and struggling in his bowels. Hos. xi. 8. *How shall I smite thee, O Ephraim? and how shall I give thee up, O Manasseh? My repentings are begun already.* He delights in their prosperity, and hath given them a rule, by which, if they walk, peace shall be upon them. He hath made them laws, the observance of which will bring heaps of blessings upon them; as we find what a multitude of favours attended it,

Levit. xxvi. 4—12. *I will give you rain in due season;* and a little after, *I will give you peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid. I will walk among you, I will be your God, and ye shall be My people.* So also, Deut. xxvii. 1—12. But those laws not being observed, then it is said, verse 24, &c., *The Lord shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust; the Lord shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies,* &c. But what is all that when opposed to the affliction here threatened, of God's withdrawing Himself? *I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence.* He will not leave them, unless they drive Him away; yea, and He is even then loath to leave them, and grieved that they are such enemies to themselves, and will not be persuaded to be better advised.

2dly. We see where the true blame of the many sufferings and miseries of the Church is to be found. The abounding of sin, and the want of repentance, these make her troubles to abound. If God's own people would take His counsel, it would be well for them; either His first counsel of *obedience,* or His after counsel of *repentance.* When they are running from Him, He calls after them, *Return, return, O backsliding Israel, why will ye die? Thou hast destroyed thyself,* says the Lord by the same prophet, *but in Me is thy help to be found.* Hosea xiii. 9. His counsel and ways would be peace, but their afflictions and sharp punishments are the fruit of their own ways; bitter fruit and wormwood, a root of bitterness. Proverbs v. 4; Jeremiah ii. 19. Doth not the preaching of the word, and particularly the doctrine of repentance, sufficiently witness for God, and against His people, when their rebellion brings calamities upon them? The often-repeated warnings and entreaties, even to those who have often slighted and despised them, shew how unwillingly He afflicts us. He does not surprise them, without warnings multiplied one upon another. Before He would proceed to treat them as enemies, to hew and slay them with the sword, He

uses His messengers of peace to deal first with the word, sharply indeed, but graciously ;—that sword of the Spirit which kills to make alive, to spare, if it might be, the destroying sword of the enemy. *I have hewn them by My prophets*, (Hos. vi. 5) and if that would have served their turn, the other hewing and slaying should not have followed. A wise enemy, who is resolved to be avenged, conceals his rage till it be accomplished, and does not threaten before he strikes, but makes the execution of his purpose the first revealing of it. Therefore, we may know that God, who doth all things most wisely, intends favour in threatening; denounces indignation that He may be interrupted. Not to inflict it, that is His desire. He would gladly have us stay His hand. A humble, penitent acknowledgment will do it. "*Minatur ne cædat, cædit ne occidat;*" says Chrysostom. *He threatens that He may not strike, and strikes that He may not destroy.* If speaking either mildly or sharply will prevail with His children, He will not stir the rod to them; and when the rod is in His hand, if shewing or shaking it will serve the turn, He will not strike with it. But this is our folly, that usually we abuse all this goodness, and will not part with our sins, till we smart for them, and be beaten from them. We pull punishment out of God's hand; as Solomon says, *The fool's mouth calleth for strokes.* Prov. xviii. 6. When these indulgent ways that the Lord uses, avail nothing, then, as a physician wearied in striving with lenitives and gentle medicines in a fixed, stubborn disease that yields not to them, it is no wonder that he betake himself to sharper remedies, and cut and burn, if need be, that He may cure. The Lord's complaint, in the beginning of the viith chapter of this prophecy, sounds this way, *When I would have healed Ephraim.* If it be thus, then, with the Church of God, that it is often found guilty of great sins, and withal, great insensibleness and impenitence, it is no wonder that it is often found under great and many afflictions. There being in the Church, in such societies as profess God's name, peculiar sins, such as are found nowhere else, by reason of God's

peculiar covenant with them, and ordinances among them; *viz.*, contempt of the ordinances, and breach of the covenant; and, by the same reason too, peculiar aggravations of the common sins, and ingredients of such things as make the same sins that other people commit, to be of a deeper dye among God's people; their special relation to Him, and the special means and mercies they receive from Him, by which they are both more instructed and more obliged to obedience; these things make the disobedience more heinous in itself, and more offensive to God. He cannot but take it very ill to be disregarded by his own Καὶ σὺ τέκνον.—Thus the Lord makes a great and loud complaint that all may hear, Isa. i. 2; calls heaven and earth to hear it, that He had *nourished and brought up children, and they had rebelled against Him.* What do we deserve for our sins? Do not our oaths and cursing, our pride and deceit, our wonderful ignorance and profaneness, our formality, hypocrisy, and, above all, our deep security, threaten us with some heavy judgment? Which cannot be avoided but by godly sorrow and earnest prayer, by the most humble way of acknowledgment and real amendment. This is our work this day; and unless we set about it for ourselves, and pray for it to the whole kingdom, we know not what we are doing. We cannot do anything to purpose in behalf of the Church of God, nor be fit supplicants for its deliverance, whilst we remain ungodly ourselves.

II. God's way of afflicting his people: *I will go and return to my place.* The way that He will afflict them, is indeed the heaviest, as conveyed in this expression; as if He should say, I will withdraw myself from them, and will not appear to them at all for a time, yea, a long time. Well may it be rendered by *affliction* in the other clause, for they shall be truly so when the Lord is gone from them. Upon the withdrawing of His gracious presence, as necessarily follows affliction, as mist upon the setting of the sun. This was heavier than all his corrections. So long as they could but hear and see him amongst them, although it were chiding, yea,

scourging them, yet, still there was this comfort, that they might speak to Him as being near them, and so, considering His merciful nature, might have hope, by their complaints and cries in His presence, to move Him to compassionate and spare them, and be reconciled. But when He was out of sight and quite gone from them, and so could neither hear nor see them in their misery, this was indeed the chief misery, worse than all that they could suffer in other punishments. In the preceding verses, He threatens to be *as a moth* to them, consuming them, though more slowly and insensibly; which was by lesser judgments that befel these kingdoms, as the history of them shews: then, *as a lion*, devouring more suddenly: but the gradation rises to the highest in this last, though to an ignorant creature it sounds least: *I will return to my place.* I will retire my favourable presence from them, and shut up all the influences and evidences of thy grace. Which, in a public national sense (as here it is to be taken), imports, not only longer and more grievous troubles than any which before had befallen them (as indeed they were), but God's leaving of them in those troubles, and not giving, as before, any sign of His merciful presence. As if God should say, I will give them up to those miseries that are to come upon them, and leave them to themselves and to their cruel enemies, and will take no notice of them, until they know what a grievous thing the want of my presence is, and how hateful their sins are, that have deprived them of it, and so be stirred up to seek my face;—they would not regard me, either in my word or in my works, whether of mercy or of judgment, so long as I stayed with them, was present amongst them:—that so I may teach them to know what is the good of my presence, by the evil of my absence, which is a heavier judgment than all I have yet inflicted on them.

And as it is thus in relation to the public condition of the Church, so is it, in a personal and more spiritual sense, to a child of God. No evil he fears so much, or feels so heavy, as God's absenting and withdrawing Himself in displeasure; nor

is there any good that he will admit to be compared with the light of God's countenance. Let others seek any good, let them have any good they can, but, says David, for himself and all the godly, the good we seek, is this and no other, *Lord, lift upon us the light of Thy countenance.* Psal. iv. 6. He can hear of any distress with courage and resolution, but this he cannot endure to hear of, but deprecates it, Hide not Thy face from Thy servant. A godly man may, in the most prosperous condition, have much concern if the face of God be hid from him. That is his great affliction, as it is here called. There needs nothing else to damp all his prosperity. *Thou didst hide Thy face, and I was troubled.* Psal. xxx. 7. Even in prosperity, riches and power, and other such poor things, do not answer the desires of a soul acquainted with God: all these are nothing without His favour shining on them: no, nor the graces which are within them, which are far more precious than all outward things. The displeased withdrawing of God's countenance, makes a sad night amid all these; as, when the sun is absent, it is night still, notwithstanding all the stars. Although God lay outward affliction on them, yet if He enlighten them, though in a dungeon, they can rejoice. Yea, when they are inwardly troubled for sin, and God is rebuking them that way, yet, that is not so bad as when He leaves them and *returns to His place.* This is more grievous than when He chides and rebukes them, which He may do, and yet, *not in hot displeasure,* as David teaches us to distinguish, it, Psal. vi. 1. It is a more comfortable condition, that He stay with them, and that He reprove them when they sin, (yea, that is a mercy,) than that He leave them, and speak not to them, nor suffer them to speak to Him. They would then desire rather to find Him present though correcting; for then, by speaking to Him, they may express their repentance and requests to Him for pardon. They would say to God, *Strike me, but hear me,* rather than be struck out from all intercourse with Him, and He hold them as His enemies. And thus God may sometimes deal with His own, and particularly

for some notable offence, until they be duly humbled and brought to a lowly acknowledgment, and so, to seek His face again; to see if they will be loath to grieve Him again.

Though we all profess to know God, yet, the greatest part of us are so far from duly esteeming Him, that we do not at all know what the spiritual, gracious presence of God is; how sweet the enjoyment, and how bitter and sad the deprivement. Oh, be desirous to understand and know this highest good, and, above all things, seek to enjoy it. And without doubt, the experience of it will persuade you to prize it and entertain it carefully; never willingly to grieve and drive away so great and so good a guest, who brings true happiness along with Him to those with whom He dwells. There is solid peace, and there only, where He is. And for the Church of God, what other thing can we, yea, what need we desire but this, as the assured help of all her distresses and sorrows, that God would return His gracious presence to her again? Then shall her enemies be turned backward, and she shall sing and rejoice in the God of her salvation. You see, this is the Church's own prayer, Psal. lxxx. 3; she desires no more than this, *Cause Thy face to shine; and we shall be safe.* That is the only sun which chases away the mist of her griefs and troubles. So then, the ending of these confusions we are lying and labouring under, is wrapped up in this; that the presence of our God be both entreated and obtained. This would make a sweet union of hearts, and make all attempts prosperous, and strike a terror into the Church's enemies. But if their *Rock* forsake them, were they never so surely supported with other advantages, yet shall they sink and fall. If He *go to His place*, and shut up His power and wisdom from their help, and leave them with themselves, this shall suffice to undo them, without any enemy. It was sad news, not only to Moses, but to the whole people, Exod. xxxiii. 3; notwithstanding they were bent to provoke Him to do so, it was very grievous for them to hear, that He had refused them His own guidance, and would withdraw Himself from them, although it was with

the promise of an angel to lead them; for little can any possible supply be made by any creature to make up that loss. It was indeed high time for them to put off their ornaments, and be humbled, when their great Ornament and their great Strength was gone from them in displeasure. Then they put off their garbs of war, and appeared in the penitential dress of sackcloth and ashes.

III. The end of God's thus afflicting His people. And we have these two things to consider in it, both here clearly expressed; 1st, God's intention in the means; 2dly, The power of these means for effecting it. *I will go till they acknowledge their offences and seek my face*, and, in the time of my absence, which will certainly be the time of their heaviest affliction, *they will seek me early*.

1. This is God's end in scourging His people; it is only to bring them to a sorrow for their offences, and an ingenuous confession of it. And if He withdraw Himself, it is not to leave them for ever and look at them no more. On the contrary, it is, that they may learn whether it is better to enjoy Him, or their sins; and that, finding themselves miserable without Him, they may leave those sins with which He will not dwell, and may come and entreat His return to them; which He is willing, being entreated, to grant them. And this He removes from them, that on their return to Him, and their earnest and humble seeking of His return to them, they may find Him, and enjoy more of His presence than before, and learn to keep it better. He throws His people into the furnace, and goes away, and leaves them there; yet, it is not to let them lie still there, but He is skilful in this work, and knows the time needful for their refining, and then returns and takes them out. His purpose is, to purge away the dross, but He will not lose the gold. Isa. xxvii. 9. *By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this will serve to take away his sin.* As that sin was the meriting cause of the affliction, it clears God's justice; the end He aims at, when He declares His graciousness and mercy to His people, being no other than

this, to destroy the meriting cause of the affliction, by their trouble; to take away that sin which procured it, and then to give them peace. That is His design. He takes no pleasure in their affliction for itself, more than they themselves do. Indeed, in punishing His enemies, there is pure justice: their punishments are not for a better end, so far as concerns them, but are appointed to torment them. But to His own people, His purpose is, by afflicting them, only to draw them from their sins, which drive Him away from them. And as we see in this the bounty of God, so, it instructs us, for our own practice, in the just way both of preventing trouble to ourselves that it come not, and of removing it if be come upon us. Is this the thing God seeks in punishing us, a sense and acknowledgment of sin committed? Then, if we give Him his end, He will not at all needlessly make use of the means. If, therefore, we either carefully shun sinful provocations, or being guilty, speedily return and humble ourselves before Him, He will not enter into displeasure against us; He will be appeased towards us. And on our seeing that which is His intent in punishing, before He begins to punish, He is very well pleased to be thus prevented. So then, if either we follow the advice of the Psalmist, Psal. iv. 4, *Stand in awe and sin not*, or that other which follows, that we *examine our hearts* concerning sin, before the decree of punishment go forth, or be put in execution on our guiltiness, pronouncing ourselves guilty, (as the word is here in the text,) which is indeed acknowledging our offences, this is the way to prevent it; and if it be begun upon us, this is the ready way to remove it, for this is the end of it. When the Lord sees His children grieved for their offences and entreating pardon, He is a tender-hearted father, the very *Father of mercies*. Those confessions and prayers that His children utter, enter His paternal ears, the rod falls out of His hand, and He turns his stripes into embraces, and His frowns into smiling. There may be, indeed, a confused cry from the sense of the smart, without repentance, that moves Him not. As He directs parents in correcting a

peevish child, *Thou shalt not spare for his crying*, (Prov. xix. 18,) so, He himself doth not spare nor leave off for that kind of crying. It is confession and submission that He seeks, not the howling and complaining which nature draws from any under sharp affliction. This, the Lord complains of in His people, by the same prophet, Hos. vii. 14. *They did not cry unto me with their hearts; they only howled upon their beds.* A man that is upon the rack for extorting confession, he will cry and roar when he confesses nothing; but it is not that which is sought of him, pain forces him to that; it is confession, and when he begins the least word of that, they presently stay and release him. Thus it was with David, and he tells it us, and distinguishes these two expressly, Psalm xxxii. 3—5. He tells us of his *roaring* under the hand of God, but that did no good: he found no ease by that, so long as he *kept silence* from this confession. But as soon as he began, or did but offer at acknowledgment, one word of confession, yea, the promise of it, brought him the release that a whole day's roaring could not obtain. *I roared all day long*, but Thou helpedst me not; still *Thy hand continued heavy upon me.* But I *acknowledged my sin; I said, I would confess my transgression, and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.*

Now, to the end we may confess aright, there must be a searching of our hearts for our sins, and for some particular one or more which God's afflictions aim at. And First, if we cannot easily find it out, consider the nature of the affliction. Secondly, seek the knowledge of it from God, who will readily, when He corrects His children, tell them what fault it is. Thirdly, however, finding so many, be sure to spare none of them, and then ye cannot but fall on the main one which breedeth you trouble.

2. The other thing here concerning the end of affliction, is, the efficacy of the means for reaching it. *In their affliction they will seek me early.* It had been early, in a wiser sense, to have sought to Him for a reconcilement before the affliction; but here it expresses a most diligent seeking, according to the

original word: for things that men are earnest upon, they will be early stirring to set about. For besides that is a certain prophecy of what was to come to pass in this people, it hath in it this general truth, with which it agrees: to wit, the moral fitness of great affliction to work this diligent seeking of God, before neglected, and acknowledgment of sin before unfelt, which is expressed in the former clause. Together with seeking His face, there must be the sense and acknowledgment of sin. There is no returning to Him, but from it. In following sin, we depart from God, and by forsaking it, we return to Him. These are inseparable; they are but one motion. It was their sin made Him leave them and go to His place; and therefore it were in vain to seek Him, retaining it, for that would drive Him further from them.

Now affliction is apt to bring men to this; such, I mean, as have any knowledge of God. Although they be not converted, yet, it works them to a temporary fit of returning and seeking God, such as they are capable of. And those make up the greatest part in the public humblings of a nation, or any multitude of people, having most of them no more heat of devotion and desire of God, than the fit of present affliction works; and therefore, when that ceases, they have done likewise with their repentance and regard of God. Being stirred only by that outward principle, they act no longer that way, than while they are acted by it. Water will be very hot, yea, boil and make a noise, when it is upon the fire; but set it off, and it returns, within a while, to its natural coldness. Thus it was often with the same people. See Psalm lxxviii. And there are still daily too many instances of it. Yet the Lord, to shew how much regard He hath to repentance, lets not the very semblance of it go to loss. He is pleased, for the repressing of sin, and the purging of His Church of gross and scandalous profaneness, to make use of public afflictions to work in many even this kind of repentance, and to answer this repentance with the removal of the affliction that wrought it. With God's own children, this method holds in a way pecu-

liar to them. They may, indeed, as well as others, sometimes stand in need of the rod for their bettering, and it may work it, but there is this difference: their grief for sin, and seeking after God, do not wholly depend on the lash; they are constant in these things, as having a living principle within them; whence they shew, in all estates, that sin is to them the greatest grief, and the favour of God the greatest good. Again, when they are surprised with sin, and possibly fall into a fit of security, and must be awaked by some affliction, and it is sent for that purpose, that renewing which it works in them, is not, as in others, a mere present violent motion, only, from the impulse of the affliction, but it is real and inward from the grace which is in them, awaked and only set on work by the correction; and therefore it is more abiding than the other. There is in them a special love to God, working their repentings and returning under the sense of His hand. And it is from God's special love to them, which others share not in, that He stirs them up to renew repentance, and upon their repentance takes off affliction, and shews Himself graciously reconciled to them. To some, likewise, it may be, that God may use some particular cross, as a partial and concurring means to the work of their repentance and conversion to God. But, however, there is in that some peculiar love of God, and that effectual working of His word and Spirit to beget grace in them, by which afflictions are sanctioned and made useful to excite and awaken grace where it is.

Now, in all these different ways, affliction is apt for this effect: 1st. Because it sets men in upon themselves, calls in their thoughts, which, in a fair season, more readily dissipate and scatter themselves abroad. As they observe, that much light disqualifies the sight of the mind, as well as that of the body, and that in the dark, men's thoughts are more united and deep; thus, in the darkness of affliction, we feel readily more inwards, and that acquaints us better with ourselves and our sins, and so, tends to the first of these two, the acknowledging of our offences. Besides, the particular respect we

speak of, is often betwixt the kind of affliction and our own sins.

2dly. When a man is driven by force from the comforts of the world, which he used to hinge upon, especially by some great affliction which breaks him off from them all, then, if he have any thoughts concerning God, those begin to work with him. He bethinks himself for no other way of help, but thinks, Could I obtain the Lord to befriend me, and shew me His favour, that were enough. He could deliver me out of this distress, and in the mean time support me under it. True, I have provoked Him, and, which is heavier than all my other troubles, I have made Him mine enemy; yet I know He is very compassionate and gracious, therefore I will go to Him, and confess my offence, and I trust He will pardon me. This is the other thing, the seeking of His face. So, affliction hath something in it suitable to the work of both. As we see, the lost son by his distress came to himself, and then resolved to return to his father. Indeed, when a man is straitened on all hands by a crowd of troubles, and finds no way out, then he finds his only way is upward. We know not what to do, but our eyes are towards Thee. The Israelites went before to other helpers; they are reproved for it, verse 13; but when once convinced of that folly, no more of any such way, but, as follows in the next words containing a description of their purposes, *Come, let us return to the Lord our God*, they acknowledge Him as the just inflicter of these calamities: *He hath torn*, and *He hath smitten*. Not a word of Salmanazer or Nebuchadnezzar, but their offended God is their smiter, and so, no recourse to other powers for this deliverance, but *Let us return to Him; He will heal us*. Oh, then let us all be persuaded to repentance. And certainly, all they who do truly mind the honour of God, and the good of His Church, will not be negligent at such a time as this. I trust that God, who heareth prayer, will have regard to their prayers and His own glory. Amen.

SERMON XXXII.

Isaiah viii. 17.

And I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for Him.

Besides the personal trials and sorrows that are the lot of the godly in this life, every one of them hath a share in the calamities and troubles of the Church; not only when some part of these troubles reaches them, for so they are personal and private, but, in the remotest and most exempted condition, there is a living sympathy which this cannot divest. And for both their own and Zion's griefs, they have but one support to stay their souls from fainting under the burden of them, but it is a great one, and strong enough to bear all the weight that can be laid upon it. And it is this the Prophet here resolves on. *I will wait upon the Lord, and I will look for Him.*

Amongst the many sins that the prophets had to contend with in the people, one, and a main one, was, their unbelief, which indeed is the root of all disobedience and perverseness. The very natural motion of the heart possessed with it, being as the Apostle speaks, *to depart from the living God*, and to turn it aside to dead, helpless helpers, makes it run to and confide in any thing rather than in Him, besides whom there is nothing at all to be confided in. To this folly, the Prophet here opposes God's command and his own resolution contrary to it: ver. 11. *For the Lord spake thus to me*, and this was the echo of His voice, resounding from my heart, *I will wait.* And this he speaks not only for himself, but in the name of all that will adhere to it, and subscribe to his purpose; and he intends it as a leading resolution to the godly both in his own and after times. And it is here upon record

for us, as the truest character of faith, and the only establishment of the mind in the days of trouble.

And this is the most powerful way of teaching, when the messengers of God teach by their own example, those duties they recommend to others. *The Lord spake thus to me, with a strong hand;* not only with the words of His mouth, but with the strength of His hand, He makes the impression of it deep upon their hearts, that the expression of it may come from that inward impression and persuasion of the truth. And that will indeed bind a man strongly (as the word signifies) to the discharge of that high calling, notwithstanding all his discouragements from within and from without, which are so many, that they who have most sense of the nature of it, would possibly undo themselves, were it not the strong hand of God upon their consciences, that binds them to it.

In the words we have to consider, 1st. The trial of faith. 2dly. The strength of it. The trial of it is in the hiding of God's face from the house of Jacob. The strength of it, is in that fixed purpose of waiting for Him, even in that time of hiding His face.

Who hideth His face.] To a natural ear, this soundeth not so much as fire, and sword, and pestilence, and captivity; but, being rightly understood, it is the heaviest word, and very far weighs down all other expressions of distress whatsoever. It is a very large, comprehensive word, All the good that we enjoy in any kind, is but a beam of the face of God; and therefore, the hiding of his face, is a high expression of a dark, afflicted state. The countenance of God shining on them in His universal providence and goodness, is that which upholds the world and all the creatures in their being: the least of them subsists by Him, and the greatest cannot subsist without Him. So that the schools say truly, "There is in the lowest, *aliquid Dei*, and in the highest, *aliquid nihili*." He shines upon all in that sense, preserving them in being, which otherwise would not continue for a moment; as it is excellently

expressed, Psalm civ. 29, and particularly concerning man, Psalm xc. 3; Job xxxiv. 13—15.

But the Church of God, which we have here under the name of *the house of Jacob,* doth after an especial manner depend upon a special aspect of His countenance for her being and well-being. Her outward peace and prosperity, with all the blessings that she enjoys, are fruits of a more than ordinary providence. And there are blessings in their nature not ordinary, but peculiar to the Church, which have more of the face of God in them than all outward splendour of prosperity hath, and therefore are the special love-tokens He bestows upon His spouse, the Church, and by which He testifies His marriage with her. And that is the being of a church, the oracles and ordinances wherein God manifests Himself to His church, makes Himself known there as by His face, which is hid from the rest of the world. And though, in comparison of the vision of glory, the clearest, even extraordinary manifestations of God, are but a glance of His back parts, (as that of Moses, which was singular,) yet, in such a sense as suits our present condition, we are said to *appear before the Lord,* and to *stand in His presence,* and *to see His face,* and *the beauty of it* in His house and ordinances. Psal. xlii. 2; xxvii. 4, *&c.*

It is true, that the outward distresses of the Church and people of God, are sometimes expressed by the hiding of His face from them, and so it is a part of what he means here; but it is not all the sense of it any where, but it is a word of their affliction, carrying a reflection upon their sin that provoked the Lord to afflict them, and so, implies His just anger kindled by these provocations. And it hath usually the ingredients of spiritual judgments under it, either the depriving them of God's ordinances in their use, or of the power and efficacy of them, (as was at this time, we see, the Prophet's complaint,) and possibly, a great measure of that heavy judgment upon people, of blindness of mind and hardness of heart, a stupid senselessness under their calamities, which is one of

the most certain and the saddest signs of their continuance. And this is the Prophet's meaning in this place. For without these, or something like them, a church may be in great affliction, and yet, not under the eclipse of God's face for all that. Yea, possibly it may shine clearer on the Church in a time of outward trouble than in the midst of peaceable and prosperous days: as the moon, when it is dark towards the earth, then the half that is towards heaven, is all luminous, and, on the contrary, when it is the full to our view, it is dark heavenward. We see it in the common instance of the primitive times, how the gold shined in the furnace, how holiness and purity of religion flourished and spread in the midst of persecutions, and zeal for God burnt brighter than the fires that were kindled against it, and triumphed over them; and soon after they were put out, how it began to cool and abate, and the purity of religion insensibly died into numbers of superstitious and gaudy devices; and the Church grew downwards, outwardly more pompous, but lost as much for that of integrity of doctrine and worship. And therefore, in the twelfth chapter of Revelations, there is a woman *clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet,* as full of heavenly ornaments as she is destitute of, and withal despises, those of the earth. And look, again, to the eighteenth chapter, and see a woman clothed in purple, and decked with gold and precious stones, and a golden cup in her hand, but herself, under all these dressings, *a harlot,* and her golden cup full of abominable filthiness. So then, doubtless, the hiding of God's face from His Church is something beyond her outward lowness and affliction, and greater and heavier than that; the withdrawing of His presence, and His not appearing for their deliverance out of trouble, and their spiritual comfort and benefit under it.

1st. Now, as that is put for the top of all distress, we should esteem it so. But in reference to ourselves, and to the Church of God, I am afraid a great part of us do not know what it is to have this light. If we did, there needed no more urging it: itself would persuade us enough to prize it, and to

fear the loss of it. The soul that knows the sweetness of His presence and His face shining on it, will account no place nor condition hard, providing it may be refreshed with that: as the saints have been in caves and dungeons enjoying more of that light in those times, when other comforts have been abridged. Then they have had a beam from Heaven into their souls in their darkest dungeon, far more worth than the light of the sun and all the advantages the world can afford. That Rabbin who lived twelve years in a dungeon in Francis's time, called a book he wrote, *The Polar Splendour;* implying that he had then seen most intellectual light when he had seen least sensible light. And thus it is with many Christians, in the darkness of distress; if they seek after this light, they may blame themselves and their own neglect if they find not somewhat of this truth. On the other hand, to a spiritual mind, this hiding of God's face will damp and distress the pleasantest outward condition which can be allotted him. It was in the midst of David's prosperity, enough to unseason all: *Thou didst hide Thy face, and I was troubled.* Psal. xxx. 7.

Now, if we would have the Lord, to whom believing souls are married in truth and righteousness, to look pleasantly on us, our great ambition should be, to walk in all well pleasing unto Him, and to seek of Himself those ornaments and that spiritual beauty which may make us lovely in His eyes; as a faithful wife decketh herself only for her husband. For all these inferior things are but figures of that mysterious life of grace which the soul hath from God, and by which it lives in Him. There are some singular largesses and outlets of spiritual joy which God gives not to every Christian, nor to any at all times. These we speak not of. But if we could enjoy more abiding influences of His love, and find Him accepting of our services at our hands, and measuring His graces to us, coming to us, and giving us access to come to Him, putting a life and blessing into His ordinances, though with different degrees at divers times; then our care should be, to entertain this friendship and correspondence diligently, to watch over our hearts

and ways, that we admit of nothing that may disturb or interrupt it, and to be jealous of the least abatement; to search and find out the cause of it without delay. And if we do thus, we shall undoubtedly find the Lord willing to converse and dwell with us; and though He give us lower measures of comfort and graces than others get, they shall be so much as will enable us to go on in our journey. Above all, study humility. The High Lord loves to give Himself and His society most to the lowly heart. Trust not at all to thyself nor to anything below Him. Lay all thy confidence upon His power and goodness. Ye see here, that it was the multitude of sins that eclipsed His face from His own people, *the house of Jacob;* as He tells them by this Prophet, chap. lix. 1. It was particularly their distrust of God, and running to other helps beside Him. Ever, the more He is in thy esteem, the more thou shalt have of Him; and the more thou believest His all-sufficiency, the more thou shalt find it and know it in thine own experience. Yea, it may be that when His face is hid from the Church, in respect of public distress and desertion, yet, it may even then shine bright upon a soul that secretly cleaveth to Him and delights in Him. So here, the Prophet says not that He hides His face from *me*, but *from the House of Jacob.*

2dly. As for the Church, learn by the Prophet and other penmen of the Holy Scriptures, to eye and consider the estate of God's Church; to take notice how He deals with it, when He shines on it and when He hides His face, and be deeply affected with it. Let thine eye be looking out, and let thine *eye affect thine heart,* as it is, Lament. iii. 51. Far be it from thee, to judge it any impertinence, and think it concerns thee not. Truly, most of us have both eyes, and if we had twenty more, we should have them all, pouring upon our private condition. Providing we might have ease and good days, we should feel little for the *afflictions of Joseph.* It were not excusable, if even our secret devotions took us up so as to forget the Church; how much less excusable, to have our hearts ingrossed wholly by our earthly concerns! And we see here

what it is we have to do on the Church's behalf; to bewail her sins, begging pardon for those evils for which God hath hid His face from her; and what to desire, only to commence her own suit anew, as troubles arise, *Cause Thy face to shine, and we shall be saved;*—as the returning of the spring makes all things to flourish, and again puts a new visage upon nature. Mark the harmony and resound of the Lord's returning to Israel; the returning of their hopes, and the sweet effects of it, Hos. xiv. 1, 5. All those heavy indignations that are on, or might trouble, the Church and themselves, arise from security, impenitence, and the fruitlessness of the word amongst them, which makes the Lord hide His face from them. Our part is, therefore, to return to Him. Oh, had we hearts to put the Lord to it, He could and would do yet greater things for us. And this we ought earnestly to desire, and with all patience to wait for it; which is the Prophet's way, *I will wait.*

The two wheels of the soul are, desire and hope. Difficulty sets an edge upon desire; and the appearance of obtaining, upholds hope. And both these are in the words the prophet here uses for his waiting and expecting; for they import an earnest desire, and yet a patient attending upon the issue. Look to that of David, Psal. cxxx. 6, *I wait for Thee, more than they that wait for the morning,*—that watch until the morning, as some render it; in the cold night that watch.—The thing the pilot waits for, is not a private good to himself, for that could not stand a counterbalance to the evil he is sensible of. The Lord's hiding His face from the house of Jacob, was that which troubled him, and his waiting was answerable, for the return of that light to the house of Jacob. Grieved that the Lord should absent Himself from His people, He looks back upon God's frequent appearings and shewing of His face to Jacob, by such visions as gave lustre and glory to the place. See Hosea xii. 9. *We found Him in Bethel, there He spake with us,*—even us who have interest in these gracious appearances. And there it is urged for a ground of hope and

waiting and calling on God. Now, for the face of God to be hid from those who were the posterity of Jacob and God's own peculiar people, was a sad thought to the prophet, who stays himself with this, that the Lord God had made known to him His purpose of returning and restoring the house of Jacob, and upon this he resolves to believe, and to rely upon God's word for it: *I will wait.*

Hoping, waiting, and believing, are taken indifferently in the Scriptures, and all the difference is only in relation to time. Faith believes the present word, and hope looks out for the after-accomplishment; and the patient waiting for it results from both. So they are but the actings of the same faith in a different notion, and they are indeed the test of faith. Our hearts are naturally of another temper than to take the Lord's word and repose upon it, and, when it is deferred, yea, and cross appearances come in betwixt, yet, still firmly to believe and patiently to wait for the accomplishment. We are of a childish humour. That which we laugh at in children, in little things, such as their minds are set on, we may be sorry for in ourselves as a greater folly, being in greater affairs. We are all in haste, and would have things come as fast as our fancying; and upon the delay of these mercies we look for, are almost ready to give over. That which brake forth from that wicked king's mouth, the seed of it is in all our hearts, when things appear worse and worse: *This evil is from the Lord; why should I wait for him any longer?* 2 Kings vi. 23. It is strange, in court suits and other business of a like nature, how long a man will wait upon another, and think all is well if he speed at last; and yet, how briskly we deal with God if He answers not at the first!

But faith teaches us (so to speak) spiritual civility, good manners towards God; it lets the soul see His greatness, and goodness, and truth, and persuades us to wait on Him, and not to weary in waiting; *to wait patiently*, as it is Psal. xl. 1. Faith composes the mind, cures that light, fickle hastiness which is naturally in us. *He that believeth shall not make*

haste, says the same Prophet. Isa. xxviii. 16. And is it not good reason that we wait for Him? Is He not wise enough to choose the fittest times for His own purposes? Well may we wait till He be gracious to us, for He *waits to be gracious* to us. Isa. xxx. 18. He is not slack, but is staying only for the due season; His love is waiting for the time that His wisdom hath appointed. And, to express His affection in our terms, He is longing for that time, as well as we are. For the same word is there used for *His* waiting, that both here and in that verse is used for *ours*, and it signifies an earnest waiting or breathing for that thing we wait for; and, therefore, since He waits and longs, our waiting is in a happy conformity to Him: and thus, with good reason it is concluded, *They are blessed* that *wait for Him.* Thus there is a word very answerable, Hab. ii. 3. *The vision is for an appointed time,*—we read, *At the end it shall speak*, but it may be rendered,—*It breatheth towards the end;* runs, as it were, so fast that it panteth. The same word is used, Cant. ii. for the rising of the morning.

3dly. By fretting impatience, there is nothing gained but needless desire. It advances not our business, but perplexes us to no purpose. And, on the other hand, patient waiting loses not a moment, but attains its end in the very due time determined; and hath this advantage in the mean time, that it puts the mind into a temper of peace and contentedness, which a man may act and profess to others, but cannot truly have within himself without faith. Isa. xxvi. 3. *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee.* This waiting is always answered; never marked with disappointment, as is the ordinary custom of other hopes. Therefore, that which the Prophet hath, *He that believeth shall not make haste*, the Apostle Peter renders, *shall not be ashamed,* 1 Pet. ii. 6. Though he hasten not, but wait, and wait long, yet, his waiting shall not shame him; none shall have matter to laugh at him for it, for his waiting shall be repaid with success, his hope shall be accom-

plished. Whereas, any other expectations make men ridiculous, and expose them to scorn, in that they look often for most contentment in those things that deceive them. The brooks that grow dry in summer, are an emblem of worldly hopes. Thus, Job vi. 19, *The troops of Tema looked, the companies of Sheba waited for them. They were confounded because they had hoped; they came thither and were ashamed.* But this waiting on the Lord never yet deluded any. *I waited patiently for the Lord,* says the Psalmist, *and He inclined to me, and heard my cry.* Psal. xl. 1. Then he makes his experience a common good; draws it to a general conclusion, v. 4. *Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust.* Thus he confirms that general truth by his particular experience, and, as the Apostle says of them who believe, *sets to his seal that God is true.* Thus ought every one, upon his experience of the Lord's goodness in his deliverance, speak to the advantage of the Lord's faithfulness, and say, As He is called *abundant in goodness and truth,* so I have found Him, and I would have others to rely on Him: if my testimony could do any good to that, or persuade them, they shall be sure to have it wheresoever I come. Thus Psalm xxxiv., the Prophet will not smother the Lord's goodness which he hath found: *This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him.* And verse 8, he invites all to *taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed are they who trust in Him.* He will advise others to this upon his own experience. Surely, he will know where to seek, when he is again put to it. As he loves the Lord for what he hath found, so he will make use of Him always in all his straits. Psal. cxvi. 1, *I love the Lord;* and seeing *He hath inclined His ear to me,* I am resolved upon this course, *I will call upon Him as long as I live.*

The difficulties which the Prophet's faith here encounters, and which commended the strength of it, are these two: 1*st.* The multitude of unbelievers round about, as a mighty torrent which he was to come against; that so few would rely on the Lord. But he resolves against it, as Joshua did for obedience,

Choose you whom you will serve, so here for faith; Let others take their course, each one run his own way, my choice is this, *I will wait on the Lord.* And this is no small matter, to maintain the preciousness of faith against the profaneness and atheism of the world. And considering the disregard of God that there is in the society and converse of the greatest part, it is much if a godly mind do not sometimes suffer something by it; and we have need to beware of it.

2dly. The other difficulty is in the thing itself, which looks so dark and unlikely, that many of His people are giving over trusting on Him, and He seems to give over helping them. *He hides His face, yet I will wait on Him alone*, says the prophet. Though all other hearts fail, yet I will wait on Thee. Though Thou withdraw Thyself, and hide Thy face, yet I will look to no other, I will stay by Thee, and wait on Thee. And although not only my days may pass, but ages, before the things be accomplished I look for, yet I will believe they shall come to pass. I will look on them in this notion, though I cannot live to see them. And, indeed, besides that the great temporal deliverances which the Prophet foresaw and here looks into, came long after his days, it is likely that he looks beyond these too, to the coming of the Messiah, of whom he speaks so clearly, both in this chapter and the former, and also in the following. Notwithstanding all the sins of this people, and all the heavy judgments their sins call for and have brought, or shall bring on them, yet he believed the Lord would send them that great Deliverer and Saviour, His only Son, whom He had promised. Thus the eye of faith looks over the head of many difficulties and of many ages betwixt it, to the thing it expects, and sees it beyond them all (so the word here, *I will look for Him*, is to stand upright as a line and look out, answering to that word, Ἀποκαραδοκία, Rom. viii.); desiring and confidently expecting good from Him to His Church. In these kingdoms, though the outward face of affairs look quite contrary, and the Lord for a time suffer our troubles to increase, and hide His face as not regarding us,

suffering things, by the perverseness of men on all hands, to turn to a universal confusion and disorder, yet still, you that know the Lord and His dealing, pray, and believe, and wait, and be assured your prayer shall be answered in due time.

Thus for your personal condition. You that desire the light of God's countenance above all things, though He seem to deny and hide His face from you for a time, yet wait on Him, leave Him not, for if ye do, ye are sure to perish; but if ye wait on Him, ye may say, It may be He will be gracious, but if He will not, I know no other to go to; I will still wait and try Him. What think ye of Job's purpose? *Though He slay me, yet I will trust in Him:* though I saw Him ready to throw me into hell, yet I will look for mercy. Faith cannot be nonplussed. There is in it a pious obstinacy that will not yield to the greatest opposition, nor give over so long as there is any possibility of prevailing. *I said*, says Jonah, *I am cast out from Thy presence*, yet for all that, I cannot give the matter up for desperate; I must have leave to *look* towards thee: *Yet, I will look towards Thy holy Temple.* Jonah ii. 4. Invincible faith, as here, *I will wait—I will look.* His doubling the word is meant to express his resolvedness, in the beginning of the verse, and in the end of it. And so, faith conquers the difficulty that makes against it. And this is the purest acting of faith, when there is nothing of sense to support it, and yet it holds out, and, as Abraham did, against hope believes in hope. When the soul is at the hardest pinch, faith will say, I will lie at the footstool of the Throne of grace until I be thrown from it. I will not away from it. I will wait on till the last moment.

A SERMON

PREACHED TO THE CLERGY.

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2 Cor. v. 20.

Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God.

It *is appointed unto all men once to die, and after that to come to judgment,* saith the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Two sad necessities to sinful man. This last, nature's light discovers not; but the other, though it be seldom deep in our thoughts, is almost always before our eyes; and though few seriously remember it, yet none can be ignorant of it. Against this known and universal evil, the chief of heathen moralists, the stoics, have much endeavoured to arm themselves. And others have bent the strength of their wits to master the fear of death, and have made themselves, and some of their hearers, conquerors in imagination: but when the king of terrors really appeared, he dashed their stout resolutions, and turned all their big words and looks into appalment.

And the truth is, there are no reasonings in the world able to argue a man into a willingness to part with a present being, without some hopes at least of one more happy; nor will any contentedly dislodge, though they dwell never so meanly, except upon terms of changing for the better.

The Christian, then (not the nominal Christian, but he who is truly such), is the only man that can look death immediately in the face; for he knows assuredly that he shall remove to *a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*

The discourse beginning this chapter, occasioned by the end of the former, continues to the 12th verse, where the Apostle subjoins an apology for his high and confident manner of speaking; which apology serves likewise for a very pertinent re-entry to the main discourse of the former chapter, concerning the worth and work of the ministry. But because of the Apostle's frequent, yet seasonable digressions, proleptic and exegetic, divers may model the analysis after divers manners.

To take, then, the discourse as it lies here together, abstract from precedent and consequent, I think, (with submission,) it may be divided into these two heads: First, the Apostle's resolution for death. Secondly, His course and manner of life. Each is supported with its proper grounds or reasons: the former to verse 9, the other to the end of the chapter.

The resolution is so strong, that he expresses it by the words of earnest desiring and groaning. And this resolution for death springs from his assurance of life after death: *We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.* He speaks in his own and his colleagues' names. And the whole matter of both is set forth by an elegant continued metaphor. Both the desire, and the assurance causing it, are illustrated, First, by their chief cause, verse 5. *Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God; who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.* Both in his gracious purpose for this hath He made us, and in a pledge of performance He hath given us earnest, even His Spirit. Then they are illustrated by their subordinate cause, faith, verse 7. *For we walk by faith, not by sight.*

His course and purpose,—for he both signifieth what he doth, and how he intends to continue to do,—His course and purpose of life is, in general, to walk acceptably in this absence from the Lord, (ver. 9.) And in particular, walking diligently and faithfully in the ministry. Ver. 11, 18.

One reason of this course and purpose, is implied in that

illative [Διὸ] which knits this part with the former. And indeed, a good frame of life hath a most necessary connexion with a strong resolution for death, and assurance of life eternal; and they mutually cause one another. That a pious life gives strength against death, and hope of eternal life, none will deny; nor is it less true, that that assurance animates and stirs up to obedience: so far is it from causing sloth, that it is the only spur to acceptable walking. *We are confident*, saith he, (ver. 8) WHEREFORE, *we labour to be accepted*, ver. 9.

This purpose is farther backed with a double reason, viz., of two pious affections; the one of fear, ver. 11, the other of love, ver. 14: that of fear, arising from the consideration of the judgment-seat of Christ; that of love, from the thoughts of his death. Ver. 14. *For that love of God constrained us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead. And he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again.* These are the reasons that stir up this eminent Apostle to a study of acceptable walking in all things, particularly in his especial calling, the ministry of reconciliation;—approving himself therein to his God, and as much as may be to the consciences of the people; saying and doing all things with intention of His glory, and their good; free from vain glory; not speaking for himself, nor living to himself, but to Him who died for him, and rose again; not possessed with carnal respects touching himself or others; no, nor entertaining carnal considerations of Christ himself, as being ascended, and therefore to be considered and conversed with after a new manner (spiritually) by all those that are new creatures in him, and reconciled to God by him, through the ministry of the word of reconciliation. Which reconciliation God himself hath thus effected; (ver. 21,) *He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.* Who knew no sin practically, knew none; was altogether free from sin, not only from commission and consent, but from the very first and least

motions of sin. And indeed no one was thus fit to be *made sin*, but one who knew none, an immaculate Lamb. *Made him to be sin*, not by constraint, not beside his knowledge and consent. The heathens observed, that their sacrifices were successless and unhappy, when the beasts came unwillingly to the altar. We need not fear in this point: our blessed Sacrifice, who was also Priest and Altar, offered himself up cheerfully: *Then saith he, Lo, I come to do thy will,* Heb. x. 7. *And I lay down my life for the sheep,* saith the good Shepherd, John x. 15. *To be sin;* not only to take similitude of sinful flesh, becoming man for man's sake, and to be *numbered with transgressors*, as the prophet speaks, Isa. liii. 12, and *to bear the sin of many*, but the imputed guilt and inflicted punishment of sin. And these sins of many made him imputatively an exceedingly great sinner, and therefore he is said to have been *made sin*, by reason of this imputation; whereupon followed his suffering as a sacrifice. And I conceive, that the reason why the word which in the first language signifies sin, is sometimes taken for the sacrifice, is because the confessed sins were, in a manner, transferred and laid upon the heads of the legal sacrifices. And so saith the prophet, *He hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.* Isa. liii. 6.

He was then *made sin* primarily, by imputation of and, consequently, by suffering for, our sins, as our expiatory sacrifice. *He made him sin for us,* in our stead, and for our good; to wit, our redemption; as follows. *That we might be made*, or *become* [γινώμενοι] *the righteousness of God in him;*—but be it *made* [γινώμεθα], it is no otherwise than Christ was made sin imputatively; and if this inference need help, each word that follows will confirm it. *Righteousness*, not righteous; to shew the perfection of it, not to urge its unity. *Righteousness*, not righteousnesses; as intimating that it is but one righteousness, whereby we are all justified of God. Not our own, but *in him*, not in ourselves. All

which makes it clear, as it were written with the sun-beams, that, by the most gracious exchange, as he took our sins, so, he hath given us his righteousness. It is true, this is always accompanied with holiness inherent, but imperfect. By that imputed righteousness, the Spouse of Christ is *clear as the sun*, all luminous; but, in regard of infused righteousness, she is only *fair as the moon*, but the one half light and that appearing unequally too, waxing and waning, and having spots at its fulness here below. She is holy in this regard, but righteousness in the other righteousness of God; His by appointing, His by gift and application, and His by acceptance. *Of God in him;* that is, its being *in him* who is called *the Lord our righteousness; in him*, in whom the Father acquiesceth, and is well pleased. *Blessed are they that trust in him.*

But to the former, ver. 20. *Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God.*

Here we have all the parties requisite in the treaty of reconciliation. God, though offended, seeking peace with men, His creatures, and by sin become rebels: *As though God beseeched you.* Christ, the only procurer, and likewise the chief ambassador, of this peace. And then, lastly, have we the sub-delegated messengers of this peace: *We, as ambassadors for Christ. We*, the Apostles, and all the ministers of the gospel. For as in their peculiarities, they had no successors, for that is repugnant, so, in those things wherein they have successors, all true ministers of the word are such. The Apostle himself calls this embassy *the ministry of reconciliation*, ver. 18.

Ambassadors for Christ, that is, in his stead. In this verse, we have the office of the ministry, under the name of ambassadors; and their message, the delivery whereof is the execution of their office, the entreaty of men to be reconciled to God. Both the office and the message are backed with due authority or warrant. The office's warrant is, that we are ambassadors

for Christ, or in his stead; that is, subordinate to him by his own ordination: the warrant of the message is God's own will who sent them, for it is His mind to beseech you by us.

But to resume the first division, whereof each of its two parts will afford its proposition; and upon these two propositions I shall insist, in what remains to be said.

The first proposition is this: *from their office, ministers of the Gospel are true ambassadors, under Christ, from God to man.* As soon as man had divested himself of God's image, his shameful nakedness made him run into the thickets; nor could he ever since then look his Maker directly in the face, nor endure to hear His immediate voice. Therefore, when God himself would come and dwell among men, He vailed His deity with human flesh: there He stood behind the wall, and shewed Himself through the lattices. *Let us not hear again the voice, nor let us see this great fire any more, that we die not,* said the people at Horeb; and the Lord, who knew their mould, saith, *They have said well:* Deut. v. 28. *I will raise them up a prophet,* said God, *from among their brethren; like unto thee;* and He did so. As He came for man's good, so, for the same end, went He away again: *It is expedient for you,* saith he, *that I go away.* John xvi. 7. And since that time, He hath continued to send men, men yet liker themselves than He was, men subject to like infirmities, sin not excepted. *Even as my Father sent me, so send I you,* saith He. John xx. 21. But the loss in this change were intolerable, did He not allay it somewhat, by sending His Spirit upon those men whom he sends to men: *If I depart, I will send him unto you,* saith he, John xvi. 7. He is gone indeed, as was necessary, but, being ascended, he caused gifts to descend upon men: *Some he gave to be apostles, some prophets, and some evangelists, and pastors and some teachers;* all *for the work of the ministry,* and that *for the perfecting of the saints, and the edifying of his body,* Eph. iv. 11, 12.

Thus, then, God treats with man in a human way. He draws not His own to Him by immediate revelations, nor

rejects He the rest by express words from heaven; but, while He sends His ambassadors indifferently to both, He works differently in them. And the admirable variety of effects of the same message, after the same manner, and at the same time delivered, do not a little set forth and commend that same [πολυποίκιλος σοφία τοῦ Θεοῦ] *manifold wisdom of God* (Eph. iii. 10); that his words should sweetly melt the hearts of some, and, as it were, more violently break the hearts of others; that it should harden and blind some, mollify and enlighten others: that it should convince those whom yet it converts not, and that, by its majesty, though in the mouths of simple men, it should bridle and restrain many of all ranks, whom it renews not; moulding and framing them to an external conformity and square carriage, whereby the world, and the church of God in it especially, are much advantaged. And the lustre of all these effects, is exceedingly set off by the quality of the messengers, being to the world's eye but contemptible men. But had it not been more congruous to the grandeur of this great King, to have sent angels, His ministering spirits, to be the ministers of the word? Had He not better have used those precious vessels for His chief treasure, than to have concredited it to vessels of earth, not to say, to discredit it by so doing? No, His thoughts are not as ours; yea, they are furthest above ours when they seem to be furthest below them. And if we look again, we shall find it more glorious to have conquered so many kingdoms, and brought them to our King, the Lord Jesus, by the preaching of a few fishermen, and such like, than if He had done it by those active spirits. The meanness of the means, raises exceedingly the glory of the Sovereign's cause.

Thus we see how the sending of men in this embassy was requisite for the frailty of man, and how well it suits with the glory of God.

Hence may be deduced some necessary things for all in general, something in particular for these ambassadors, and something for those to whom they are sent.

First, it may persuade all to entertain more respectful thoughts of this function than most men do. Some speak out their disrespect; others, though not expressing it in words, have it lurking in their breasts, and appearing in their practices. To instance in one error or two, which many labour under, springing evidently from a low esteem of this calling.

1. Are there not divers pretenders to it, who being, and possibly finding themselves, insufficient for all other employments, have their recourse to this, making no doubt of their sufficiency for it? Yea, such there are, too many; their worldly friends being guilty either of begetting in them, or of fomenting this presumption. On the other side, be there not others who, having some advantage of outward rank, or inward endowments, would think themselves, and be thought by those who have interest in them, to be exceedingly disparaged if this calling were mentioned to them, and who would count it a great abasing, yea, a losing of themselves to embrace it? Against these two gross mistakes may very appositely be opposed this, *We are ambassadors for Christ.* From which expression it is most evident, that the ministry both requires the best and ablest, and deserves them; that the refuse and abjects of men cannot be worthy of it, nor it unworthy of the choicest. It requires able men, because they are to be *ambassadors;* and this will follow of itself. Again, consider *whose* ambassadors, and in what business. The ambassadors of the King of kings, in the weighty matter of treating peace betwixt Him and mankind. Shall it be said of His ambassadors, as Cato said to those who were sent by the Romans to Bithynia, counting that three wants were amongst them, *viz.*, that they had neither feet, nor head, nor heart.

It is true God may, and sometimes, especially in extraordinary times, does make use of unlettered and low-qualified men; but then He inlays their defects by a singular supply: therefore, that is no rule for us in the ordinary vocation. It is a piece of God's prerogative, to use unlikely means with-

out disadvantage. Any thing is a fit instrument in his hands; but we are to choose the fittest and best means, both in our own affairs and in His service; and if in any, this eminent service of embassy requires a special choice. If bodily integrity was requisite in the servers at the altar under the Law, shall we think that the mentally blind and lame are good enough for the ministration under the Gospel, which exceeds in worth and glory? *Who is sufficient for these things?* saith the great doctor of the Gentiles. Our practices seem to answer, Any body: And it is observable, that carelessness in this kind is usually the companion of false worship, and too much care of decking, trimming, and making gay the externals of it. It is said of Jeroboam, that *he made high places*, but *priests of the lowest of the people*, 1 Kings xii. 31. As it was said, that the church had. As he said of "golden cups and wooden priests," so we may say of that church which values them so much, They are well looked to, neatly adorned, but their priests grossly ignorant.

This function *requires* able men, being a weighty charge, and is *worthy* of them, being highly honourable. And doubtless, there is egregious profaneness in the contrary thoughts. The heathen can style those stones more happy than common ones, which are chosen for the building of temples, and amongst these, the altar-stones the happiest. And shall we not account truly happy those living stones, which are hewn out for God's building, and chiefly (so to speak) the altar-stones, the messengers of peace? What can be more honourable than to serve the highest Lord in the chiefest functions of His house? How ought we to account of an ambassador's place, when King David esteemed so highly a door-keeper's office in this King's court!

2. *We are ambassadors.* This may correct another error in the world, though accounted by those that entertain it, a choice piece of policy for God. It is this: the ministry being so mean a thing in the world's eye, and so obnoxious to contempt, it is expedient that it be raised and brought into credit

by annexed excessive dignities, high titles of honour, and suitable revenues. It is true, that penury and want of competency in temporals, in those who bring an eternal treasure, argues base ingratitude, and is most unworthy of well constituted churches. But where the remedy exceeds too far, it becomes worse than the disease, being compounded of carnal prudence and ambition, both of which are *enmity to God*. And this I take to have been one of Germany's provoking sins, and Rome's predominant sin. For these incongruous honours, to speak it in a word, raising some from contempt, teach them to contemn and insult over their brethren; to say nothing of their affronting of higher quality, yea, of princes and kings themselves, while they pretend to be the only supporters of their crowns. And if this their insolency in advancement, devolve them back again in contempt, and their honour become their shame, they may thank themselves. Their Master taught them another method of attaining due esteem. He hath given honour enough to those whom he hath made his ambassadors; and if men contemn this, he takes the indignity as done to himself, and he is able enough to vindicate his own honour. *Let men esteem of us, as the ministers of Christ*, 1 Cor. iv. 1. Here is all the esteem St. Paul requires; and they are unworthy of this who are not content with it. Their best way, whom God employs, is to study His glory, and He will not fail to honour those that honour him.

And this leads me fitly in from the conviction of these common errors, to a word of particular exhortation to those ambassadors, from the nature of their calling so expressed. And it binds upon them chiefly these four duties: 1. Piety. 2. Prudence. 3. Fidelity. 4. Magnanimity.

Piety, in two steps or degrees: first, to look they be friends with God: secondly, to labour to be inward with Him.

[1.] They are to look that they be friends with God. For it no way suits that they be ambassadors for reconciliation, who are not themselves reconciled: it is certain, such will move

both coldly and successlessly in the work. What He can do extraordinarily who doth always what He wills in heaven and earth, we question not. He can convey grace by those to whom He gives none. He can cause them to carry this treasure, and have no share in it; carry the letter and not know what is in it; and make them, so to speak, equivocal causes of conversion.

But, usually, He *converts* those whom He makes the happy *strengtheners of their brethren*, Luke xxii. 32. We think, that they who savingly know not Christ, should not be fit to make other men acquainted with him. He who can tell men what God hath done for his soul, is the likeliest to bring their souls to God. Hardly can he speak to the heart, who speaks not from it. *Si vis me flere*, &c. Before the cock crows to others, he claps his wings, and rouses up himself. How can a frozen-hearted creature warm his hearers' hearts, and enkindle them with the love of God? But he whom the love of Christ constrains, his lively recommendations of Christ, and speeches of love, shall sweetly constrain others to love him. Above all loves, it is most true of this, that none can speak sensibly of it, but they that have felt it. Our most requisite pulpit-orators, yea, speak they with the tongues of men and angels, without the experience of this love, are no fit ambassadors for Christ, for his embassy is a love-treaty. Such men are but sounding brass, and tinkling cymbals. The sublimest and best contrived of their discourses, glowworm like, or as those foolish fires, may have some light with them, heat they have none. When a man speaks of reconciliation and happiness as if he had some interest therein himself, when his words are animated with affection, as he is like to beget some affection where there is none, so, a pious hearer that is already gained to Christ, finds the embassy drawing him effectually nearer Heaven: blowing that Divine fire that is within him, and causing it to mount upwards. *As in water, face answereth to face, so doth the heart of man to man*, saith the wise man, Prov. xxvii. 19. There is a certain peculiar sympathy and sweet cor-

respondence betwixt souls that lodge the same spirit. Those that are united to the same Head, Christ, by reconciliation, find their hearts agreed, and they relish the discourses one of another. Thus important is it every way, both for the begetting and for the strengthening of grace, that the ambassador thereof be a reconciled person.

[2.] As he must look that he be friends with God, so, secondly, he must labour also to be inward with God. For though the embassy be the same, in great part, in the mouths of all God's ambassadors, yet, there is a world of mysterious particulars contained in it, and they meet with many intricate pieces in their particular treaties with men's consciences. And in these, know they the will of the King, their master, more or less clearly, according as they are more or less intimate with Him. How knew divine Moses so much of the Lord's will, but by much converse with Him?

These ambassadors, to the end that they may do so, must labour for integrity. His *secret* is with the righteous. For humility. He is familiar indeed with the lowly; He takes up house with them: *With such a one will I dwell, saith the Lord.* God's choice acquaintance are humble men. For the spirit of meekness. He whom we named was eminent in this, and so in familiarity with God. Christ singularly loves the meek and lowly, they are so like himself. One thing they must mainly take heed of, if they aspire to a holy familiarity with God; earthly-mindedness. If no servant of the god of mammon can serve this God in point of common service, how much less can he be fit for an eminent employment, as an embassy, and enjoy the intimacy requisite for that employment? These messengers should come near the life of angels, *always beholding the face of the Father of lights.* But if their affections be engaged to the world, their faces will still be that way. Fly high they may, sometimes, in some speculations of their own; but, like the eagle, for all their soaring, their eye will still be upon some prey, some carrion here below. Upright, meek, humble, and heavenly minds, then, must the am-

bassadors of this great King have, and so obtain his intimacy, mounting upon those wings of prayer and meditation, and having the eye of faith upwards. Thus shall they learn more of His choice mysteries in one hour, than by many days poring upon casuists and schoolmen, and such like. This ought to be done, I confess; but above all, the other must not be omitted. Their chief study should be, that of their commission, the holy scriptures. The way to speak skilfully from God, is often to hear Him speak. *The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned,* saith the evangelic prophet, (chiefly intending Christ,) *to speak a word in season to the weary.* Ay, that is the learnedest tongue when all is done. But how?—*He wakeneth me morning by morning; He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.* Isa. l. 4.

Thus we see how these ambassadors have need to be friends and intimate friends with their Lord. For if they be much with God in the mount, their returns to men will be with brightness in their faces, and the law in their hand; their lives and their doctrines shall be heavenly.

2. The second requisite of these ambassadors is, *Prudence,* or dexterity to manage their Master's business. Wise princes and states, in choosing their ambassadors, above all other kinds of learning, have respect to practical abilities; and they that can best read the several geniuses and dispositions of several nations and particular men, and accordingly know how to treat with every one according to their temper, to speak to them in their own language, are judged the fittest men for that employment. Great is the diversity of humours among men: some are timorous, some rash, some avaricious, some ambitious, some slow and leaden, others precipitant and mercurial, and many other varieties. Now, to know how to deal with each of these in their own kind, for the advancement of his master's business, is a special discretion in an ambassador. And those ambassadors we speak of, had as much need of it as any: they have men of all, both outward and inward differences, to deal with, and the same men so different from themselves at divers

times, that they are hardly the same; some ignorant, others learned, some weak, others strong, some secure with false presumptions, others tormented with false fears. And much prudent consideration of those differences, and accommodating themselves thereunto in the matter and manner of their discourses, is very expedient in their treaties. *Of some have compassion, plucking them out of the fire, making a difference.* Jude xxii. What other is St. Paul's *becoming all things to all men, that he might win some?* 1 Cor. ix. 22. And this policy is far different from temporizing, and compliance with evil, which in no case can be tolerated in these ambassadors, for that is disadvantageous to their business: it may be the way of their own promotion, but it is not the way to advance their Master's kingdom, which end should be the square of all their contrivances, and with it nothing will suit but what is upright. A kind of guile they may use, but it must carry their King's impress; it must be a holy guile; and such, the ministers of the Gospel not only may, but ought to study. Fishers of men they are, and why may they not use certain baits, and diversity of them? But as their catching is not destructive, but saving, so must all their baits be. They must quarter dove-like simplicity and serpentine wisdom together, as He commanded them, who sent them on this embassy.

3. Their third duty is *Fidelity;* and that both in the matter of their embassy, and in the manner of delivering it. In the matter, they must look to their commission, and declare the whole counsel of God, not adding nor abating any thing. We know how heinously kings take the presumption of their ambassadors in this kind; though reason be pretended, and perhaps justly, yet, even they account obedience better than sacrifice: yea, some of them have been so precise and tender of their prerogative, that they have preferred a damageable affront to their commands, before a profitable breach of them. And above all kings, this King who is above them all, hath good reason to be punctual in this; for princes' instructions

may be imperfect, and as things may fall out, prejudicial to their purpose, but His are most complete, and always so suitable to His end, that they cannot be bettered. The matter, then, of this embassy is unalterable: in that, these ambassadors must be faithful. Faithful, also, in the manner of delivering it; with singleness and diligence. [1.] With *singleness*, free from by-respects, not seeking their own honour or advantage, but their Master's; abasing themselves where need is, that He may be magnified; never hazarding the least part of His rights for the greatest benefit that could accrue to themselves. The treachery of an ambassador is of all the most intolerable;—to deceive under trust. If any who bear the name of God's legates, think to deceive Him, they deceive themselves; He cannot be mocked. They must all appear before His judgment-seat, and be unveiled before men and angels. Knowing, therefore, *the terrors of the Lord*, let them go about His work with candour and singleness of heart. And [2.] with *diligence. He that is diligent in his work, shall stand before princes*, saith the wise prince. Prov. xxii. 29. The great Prince of Peace shall admit those to stand eminently before him, who are diligent in his embassy of peace. Such are they who make it their meat and their drink, as Christ himself did, who accept all occasions, yea, seek and make occasions, to treat with men for God. That oracle-like preaching of one sermon or two in a year, is far from this sedulity and instancy in treating, which are requisite in God's ambassadors. The prince of darkness hath more industrious agents than so: they *compass sea and land to make a proselyte;* they hold to it, and are content to lose many a labour, that some one may prosper.

And this may meet with the discontent that some ministers take at their great pains and little success. We see Satan's ministers can comport with this. Since it is no just exception against God's work, still be in thy business, and refer the issue to thy Master. *Wait on God, and do good,* saith the royal Psalmist. Psal. xxxvii. 3. *Sow thy seed in the morning,*

and in the evening withhold not thy hand; for thou knowest not which will prosper, saith the wise son. Eccl. xi. 6. As the moralist speaks of benefits, a man must lose many words among the people, that some one may not be lost. *I am all things to all,* saith our Apostle, *that I may gain some.* 1 Cor. ix. 20. And though in continuing diligent, thy diligence should still continue fruitless to others, to thee it shall not be so. Thy God is a discreet Lord: as He hath not put events into thy hand, He will not exact them at thy hands. Thou art to be accountable for planting and watering, but not for the increase. Be not wanting in thy task, and thou shalt not want thy recompense. Shouldest thou be forced to say with the prophet, *I have laboured in vain, and spent my strength for nought,* in regard of success, yet, if thou hast laboured, so laboured as to spend thy strength in that service, thou must add with him, *Yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God.* Isa. xlix. 4.

4. The last duty recommendable to these ambassadors, is *Magnanimity,* which is no less needful than the preceding. Many a difficulty and discouragement is to be encountered in this service, and, which is worse, some temptations of prosperity and advancement. If you persist to plead freely for your Master, you shall be the very mark of the world's enmity. What mischief is there, that Christ hath not foretold his disciples to expect at their hands? For Christ circumvents no man to his service; he tells them what they shall meet with: *They shall prosecute you through their courts,* ecclesiastical and civil; *deliver you up to councils,* and *scourge you in their synagogues, and accuse before governors and kings* (Matt. x. 17); yea, *they shall think they do God good service when they kill you.* His own ambassadors. Many mountains are to be climbed in going this embassy, and the rage of many a tempest to be endured. *His animis opus est, et pectore firmo.* Courage, then, ambassadors of the Most High! See if you can rise above the world, and tread upon her frownings with the one foot, and her deceitful smilings with the

other. Slight her proffers, and contemn likewise her contempts. There is honour enough in the employment, to cause you to answer all oppositions with disdain. Let it be as impossible to turn you aside from your integrity, as the sun from its course. For that message which you carry shall be glorious in the end: it shall conquer all opposite powers. When you seem exposed in your voyage to the fury of winds and waves, remember what you carry. *Cæsarem vehis, et fortunam ejus*, as he said; it cannot suffer shipwreck. Let no sufferings dismay you. For a generous ambassador will always account it far more honourable to suffer the worst things for doing the best service he can to his Master, than to enjoy the world's best rewards for the least point of disloyalty. And if ever Master was worthy the suffering for, yours is. Happy are you when they persecute you for His sake, as himself hath told, Matt. v. 10. There are honourable examples to look back to —*So persecuted they the prophets;* and a precious recompense to look forward to—*Great is your reward in Heaven.* Our blessed Redeemer refused no hardships for the working out of this peace, which is your embassy. He knew what entertainment did abide Him in the world, what contempts would be put upon Him by mankind which He came to redeem; He knew of the full cup of His Father's wrath, that He was to drink for them; yet, resolution arising from love, climbed over all these mountains, and happily conquering all these difficulties, attained the desired end. Worthy ambassadors, follow this generous Leader in promulgating the peace he hath purchased. Tread his steps who *endured the cross and despised the shame,* and your journey's end shall be suitable to his who *is set down at the right hand of the Father.* Heb. xii. 2. Well did St. Paul study this copy when he said, *I know that bonds abide me every where; but I care for none of these things, so that I may finish my course with joy.* Acts xx. 24. The looking over to that great end, is the great means of surmounting the hardest things that intervene. The eyeing of that much will make an undaunted ambassador. And that this lesson of

courage is very pertinent for them, will appear by Christ's own urging it upon the first legates he sent out, when he dwelt here below: *Fear not*, saith he, *them that can kill the body*, &c., Matt. x. 28; where, methinks, he propounds, as the chief incentive of courage to these ambassadors, the joint consideration of those to whom they are sent, and of Him who sends them. For, seriously considered, it must needs be found most incongruous, that ambassadors of God should be afraid to speak to men. Fear not them; the utmost they can do reacheth no further than the tabernacles of clay. Nor can they touch that without permission: not a hair of their head falls without notice of their Master. But suppose the highest, let them kill the body; thither goes their rage and no further. *But fear Him who can kill both body and soul.* Fear not, but fear. As this fear hath better cause, so it is the only expelling cause of the other fear. Nothing begets so generous and undaunted spirits as the fear of God: no other fear, none of those base ones that torment worldly men, dare claim room where that fear lodgeth. The only cause of these legates' fears, is the inconsideration of their Master. Would they remember him much, it would ennoble their spirits to encounter the hardest evils of life, and death itself, courageously in his service. Their reward is preserved for them, and they for it; yea, it alone puts them into full possession. For their Master, beyond all kings, hath this privilege; he can not only restore life lost in his service, but, for a life subject to death, yea, a dying life, can give immortality, and, for their sufferings, light and momentary, an eternal weight of glory. Let them be impoverished in his service, it is the best bargain in the world to lose all for him. Let them be scourged and stigmatized for the ignominy of these sufferings, the spirit of glory shall rest upon them. If that Persian prince could so prize his Zopyrus, who was mangled for his service, how much more will this Lord esteem those who suffer so for him! He is the tenderest King over his servants in the world. Those who touch them, touch the apple of his eye. Let his messengers, then, despise

the worst the world can do against them ; yea, let them say of death, as he said of it to his adversaries, Anytus and Melitus, *Kill me they may, but they cannot hurt me.*

The lessons to those to whom these ambassadors are sent, are: 1st, Do not dishonour them. Remember David and the king of Ammon. No king resents this so much as God: *He that despiseth you, despiseth me.*

2dly. Slight not their message: know whence it comes. This *not discerning* of holy things, is the pest of Christians. The Apostle specifieth it in the Lord's body. 1 Cor. xi. 29 ; it is so in the Lord's word. He condescends, in using earthen creatures, to explain the choicest of heavenly mysteries, and earthen vessels to convey these treasures. And if that which He intended for their advantage, the wretched sons of men make it a stumbling-block, and if they contemn the grace, for the meanness of the persons that are made conveyors and instruments of it, what may they expect?

3dly. Respect even the ambassadors for His sake whom they represent, *counting them worthy of double honour.* For this is the will of your Lord and their Lord, your King and their King. And to this King immortal, be all honour, and glory, and praise, by all the churches, world without end. Amen.

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